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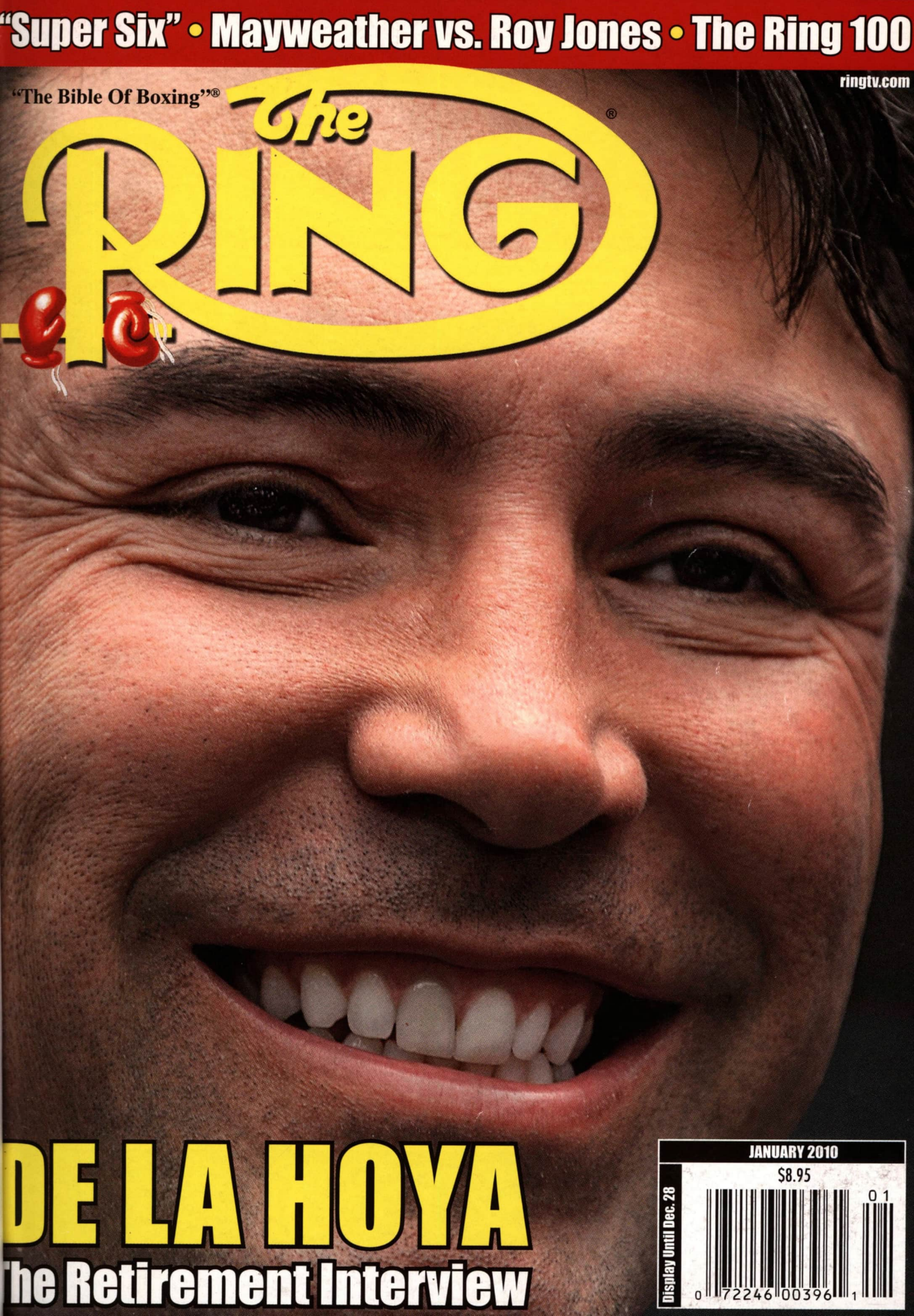

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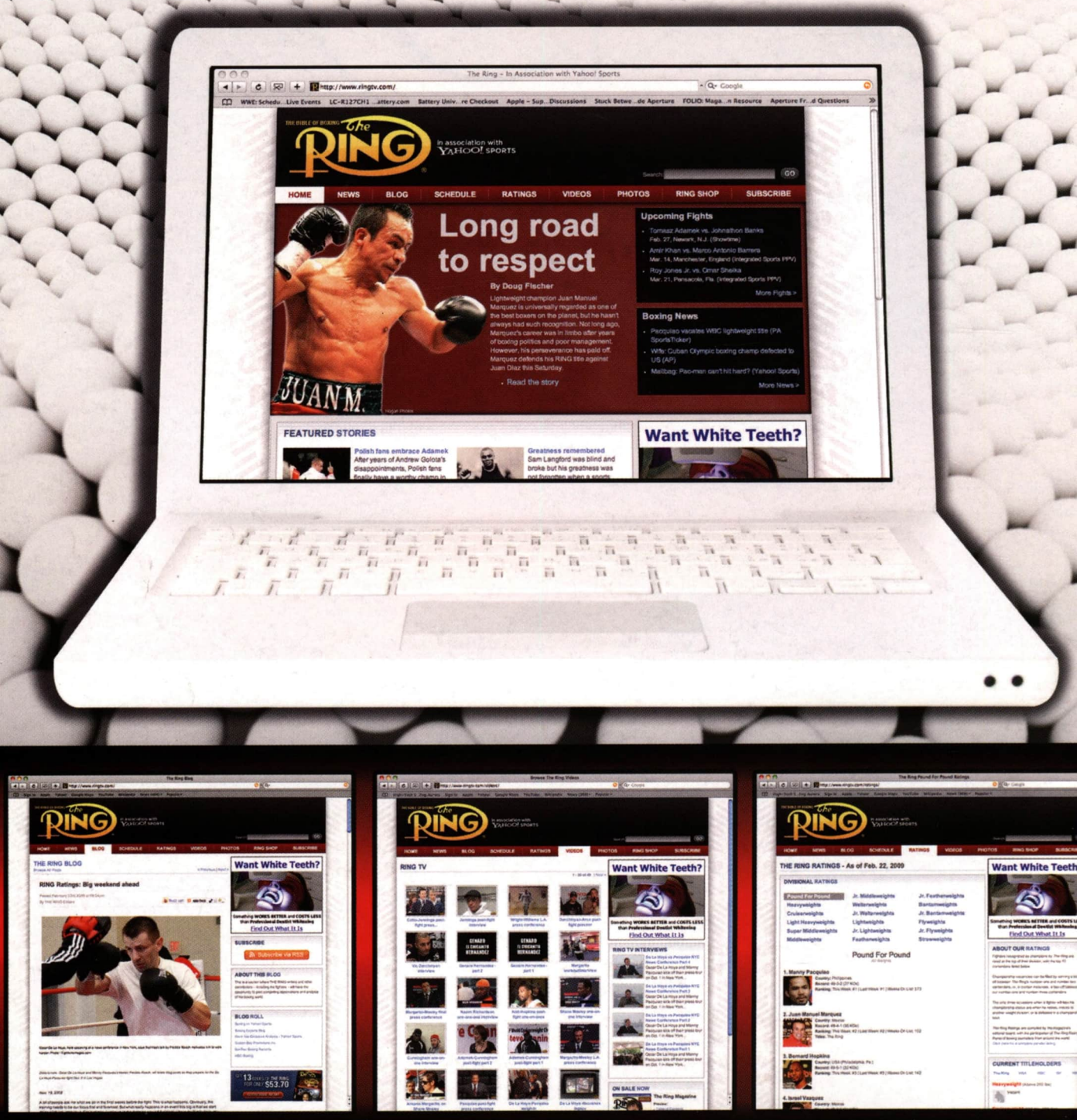

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Volume 89, No. 1 January 2010

The RING

There's No Place Like Home

One of boxing's many charms is its capacity for the surreal, so we really should not have been surprised that for one magical weekend in October 2009, Lodz, Poland, was the center of the boxing universe.

Sure, it was a relatively slow weekend for the fight game, with no Saturday night fights on HBO or Showtime. But the extent to which the citizens of the Rzeczpospolita Polska supported "The Polish Fight Of the Century," between Tomasz Adamek and Andrew Golta, would have been remarkable on any weekend.

Poland embraced with nationalistic glee a match that even the most charitable fans outside the country saw as nothing more than a bizarre novelty. Arena Lodz, the largest indoor venue in Poland, attracted a capacity crowd of more than 14,000, with scalpers reportedly doing a brisk business. The fight was televised live by Postat, Poland's biggest network, and prefight predictions of more than 10 millions viewers (approximately a quarter of the population) were easily surpassed.

But why was the fight such a huge success? How come the fact that it was a total mismatch didn't dampen enthusiasm one iota? What kind of alchemy was at work?

The answer is simple: As has often been said of politics, all boxing is local. Hometown heroes are the foundation of the sport, the source of its athletes, and the root of the universal parochialism that keeps the flame burning.

Those who don't comprehend how boxing works often misunderstand this maxim because they can't see beyond the individual event. To the boxing-is-dead crowd, what happened in Lodz was an isolated one-off, an inconvenient truth they'd rather not examine too closely. They fail to realize that in boxing, as with much of life, the whole is far greater than the sum of its parts.

In a global economy, things look different than they used to, but the same principles are at work. Except for a handful of superfights, it's local favorites who make the boxing world go around, even when matches are disguised as part of an international event such as Showtime's "Super Six" super middleweight tournament.

There were also standing-room-only crowds in Nottingham and Berlin for the Carl Froch-Andre Dirrell and Arthur Abraham-Jermain Taylor fights a week before Adamek-Golota, and just like in Lodz, the fans were there to see the homeboys. If either of these two Super Six cards had been held at a Las Vegas casino, the promotions would have failed as horribly as Golota did in the ring against Adamek.

The same way small clubs used to be boxing's feeder system, in the shrinking world we now inhabit, an international pool of local favorites has replaced the old system of neighborhood rivalries.

It all comes down to human nature. The phenomenon of the hometown hero dates back to the time when the toughest guy in the village was also typically the chief. Today, the toughest guy in the village is defenseless against the power of the establishment, except in the boxing ring, where individual prowess is still celebrated.

And if the boxer from your tribe wins, it stirs something elemental inside of you. Pride has something to do with it, but at the most fundamental level it's about being reassured that the toughest guy in the village can still keep us safe from invading marauders.

Like no other sport, boxing has tapped that emotional need, and even if most consumers don't really understand what they're buying, they know it feels good when they see it.

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[Opening Shot]

Sock It To Me

FDNY firefighter Mike Reno (far right) and NYPD Lt. Ray Braine don't seem to mind giving Wilhelmina models Tarale Wulff and Annmarie Nitti a free shot at their unprotected chins during a photo session to publicize the "Battle Of The Badges" at Madison Square Garden. Let's hope both boxers kept their hands a bit higher once the opening bell rang for the 22nd firemen vs. policemen tournament.

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Contents

The Ring

January 2010

Cover Photo by **Gabriel Bouys/Getty Images**
Cover Design by **David Romanosky**

Features

28 **Hey Floyd, Don't Be Another Roy Jones**
By Joseph Santoliquito

34 **Semi-Super Start To "Super Six"**
By Brian Doogan

40 **The Ring Interview: Oscar De La Hoya**
"Never In My Wildest Dreams Did I Think I Would Be One Of Those Fighters Who Turned Old Overnight"
By Nigel Collins

52 **Qualified Success**
Gamboa Shines, Juanma Exposed, Mtagwa Steals The Show
By Don Stradley

59 **The Ring 100**
Ranking The Best Fighters In The World
By William Dettloff

88 **Hall Of Famer Young Stribling**
A Daredevil Everywhere Except Inside The Ring
By Don Stradley

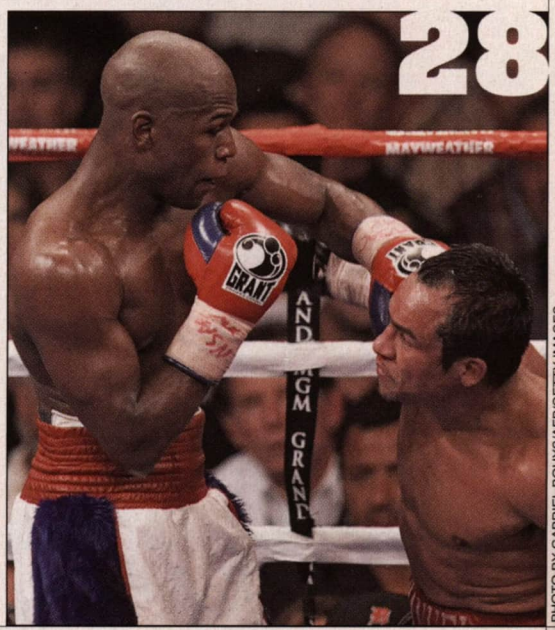


PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Ringside Reports

98 **Fighter Of The Month & Ringside Reports**

Ratings

13 **Ratings Analysis**

14 **The Ring's International Ratings & Records**

59

PHOTO BY RAY KASPROWICZ/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

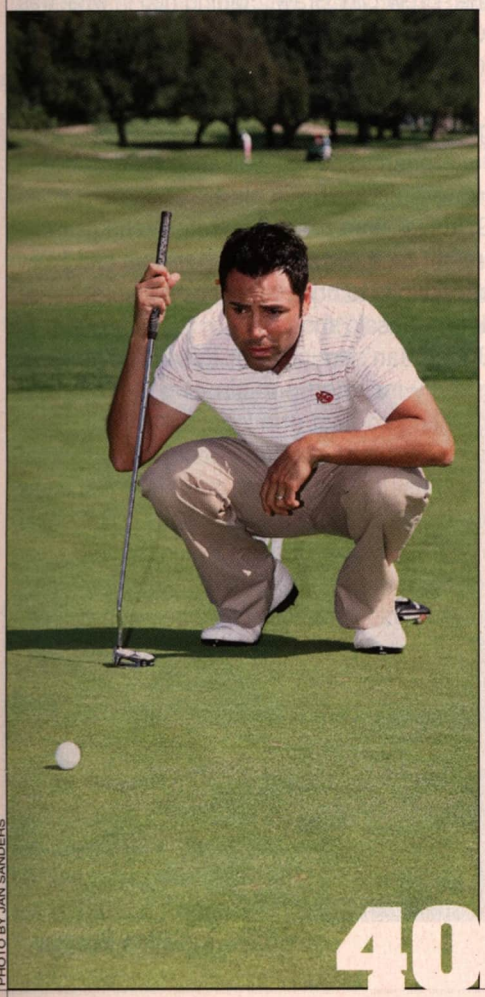


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

40

Departments

3 **Ringside** *by Nigel Collins*
8 **Round One**
16 **Ryan Out Loud** *by Jeff Ryan*
18 **Digging Deep** *by Ivan Goldman*
22 **Camera Clicks**
24 **New Faces: Chris Avalos** *by Tim Starks*
96 **Worldwide Fight Results**
108 **Flashback: July 1966**
112 **Hall Of Fame Profile: Joey Maxim**
115 **Perfect Execution** *by Bernard Hopkins*
120 **Amateur News And Views** *by Michael Rivest*
122 **Fight Doctor** *by Margaret Goodman, MD*
124 **Hitting On The Break** *by Jim Bagg*
128 **Come Out Writing**
130 **Looking Ahead** *by Don Stewart*

Butterbean's Last Fight ... We Hope

"Be a part of history in the making!" urged the poster announcing a new boxing promotion last October 3 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The reference to history didn't have anything to do with it being the first pro fight card scheduled in over a decade in what was once one of the country's top boxing venues. Ketchel, Wolgast, Dempsey, Leonard, Greb, Pep, and Robinson are among the immortals that once graced Milwaukee rings. And now to that list was being added the name of another "fighting superstar," as the *Marquette University Tribune* referred to the headliner of the October 3 show:

Butterbean.

The rotund novelty act also known as Eric Esch had a brief vogue on cable and pay-per-view TV in the 1990s, after he emerged from the Toughman ranks. Abetted by Bob Arum, Butterbean plowed through a long line of nondescript opponents as "King of the Four-Rounders." But Humpty-Dumpty had a big fall when journeyman Mitch Rose stopped him in 1995, and disclosed afterwards that he'd rejected a $5,000 bribe offer to go in the tank. Later, several Butterbean victims were outed as divers and phonies. Eventually, Esch wrangled a fight against former heavyweight champion Larry Holmes, lost, and moved on to rasslin' and mixed-martial arts shows.

The kind of "history" boxing could do without

Three years after his last gloved appearance, the 43-year-old Esch resurfaced in Milwaukee for the "Brew City Brawl," pitting him in what was announced as his boxing swan-song ("Boxing has become a little boring for me") against 46-year-old Wisconsinite Harry Funmaker, who hadn't fought in four years himself, and had already lost to Butterbean twice, as well as to Peter "Cocoon Of Horror" McNeeley, in his 17-17 career.

Said first-time promoter Peter Vehemas with a straight face: "My team of partners and I saw an opportunity to bring recognition and relevance back to a classic sport."

Butterbean's training for this historical event reportedly included participating in a chicken-wing eating contest at a local tavern two nights before. That was probably more edifying than the fight itself, which went on before just a few hundred spectators in the cavernous U.S. Cellular Arena. After four rounds in which the 400-plus-pound Butterbean mostly laid against the ropes, Funmaker was awarded a split-decision victory.

Whether boxing is at last truly rid of Butterbean remains to be seen. "...It's almost like Brett Farve," he said before the fight. "You just get tired of it, then you miss it a little bit and come back."

But the man extolled on a Milwaukee sports website as "The People's Champion who is living out the American dream" also raised another, equally alarming specter. In the works, he hinted, is a Butterbean "reality" TV show.

—Pete Ehrmann

Briscoe For B-Hop

Bernard Hopkins received the coveted Briscoe Award as 2008's Philly Fighter of the Year at the Philadelphia press conference held to announce B-Hop's December 2 fight with Enrique Ornelas at the Liacouras Center. The Briscoe was presented by John DiSantos, of phillyboxinghistory.com, who originated the award especially for Philly fighters and named it after legendary local middleweight Bennie Briscoe.

The statue of Briscoe was created by sculpture Carl LeVotch, and the winners are selected by votes cast by the local boxing media and by online voters, based on a list of nominees in two categories: Fighter and Fight of the Year.

So far seven Briscoes have been awarded. Cruiserweight Steve Cunningham was 2007's Philly Fighter of the Year. The 2007 Fight of the Year was Lenny DeVictoria TKO 7 Elad Shmouel, while '08 honors went to Gee Cullmer W 8 Jameel Wilson. Both bouts took place at the Blue Horizon.

Three honorary Briscoes have also been awarded to former world light heavyweight champion Harold Johnson, promoter J Russell Peltz, and, of course, Briscoe himself.

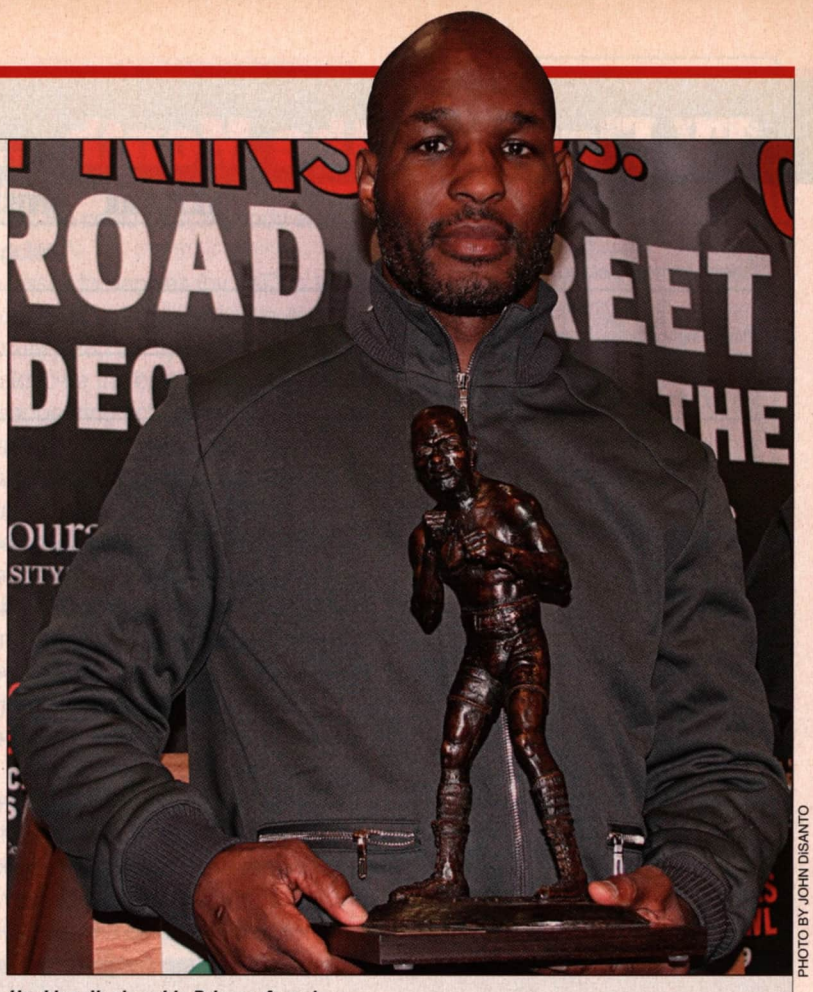


PHOTO BY JOHN DISANTO

Hopkins displays his Briscoe Award

Invisible Opponents

In H.G. Well's *War of the Worlds*, the seemingly invincible Martian invaders, against whom mankind's most powerful weapons were worthless, were killed off by the common cold. Recently, a trio of the prize ring's finest practitioner—with a combined record of 105-3-1 (68)—have also fallen victim to microscopic organisms.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Pavlik's staph-infected left hand

The strange case of middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik, sidelined for months with a virulent staff infection, has received the most attention. According to the Associated Press' Dave Skretta, in September Pavlik's life was in peril when he had an allergic reaction to medication, which caused his temperature to "soar past 104 degrees, and his heart rate to 150 beats per minute." When he was admitted to the Cleveland Clinic, Pavlik had "sweat pouring off his body, which had turned shades of red and purple."

Although Pavlik's condition was the most serious, WBA featherweight titleholder Chris John and IBF junior flyweight beltholder Brain Viloria were both hospitalized in 2009 with dengue fever, a virus-based disease often spread by mosquitoes.

Viloria became sick while staying in the Philippines in September, and was given a blood transfusion while hospitalized. Then, in late-October, John was admitted to Telogorejo Hospital in Semarang, Indonesia. Dengue fever is also known as "break-bone fever" due to the severe pain that usually accompanies the disease.

All three fighters are expected to make full recoveries.

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
10/02/09	Marcus Johnson W 8 Hector Villereal *Talented Johnson cannot get rid of weak foe*	Showtime	sm	C-	C-	C
10/02/09	Antwone Smith KO 9 Henry Crawford *Third-straight impressive upset by Smith*	Showtime	w	B-	B+	B
10/02/09	Allan Green W 10 Tarvis Simms *Sub-par performances by Green*	Showtime	sm	B	C+	C
10/10/09	Pawel Wolak KO 5 Carlos Nascimento *Polish transplant win battle of brawlers*	PPV	jm	C+	B-	B-
10/10/09	Odlanier Solis KO 2 Monte Barrett *Arreola joked about weighing over 270 pounds; Solis actually did!*	PPV	h	B-	C	C+
10/10/09	Yuriorkis Gamboa KO 4 Whyber Garcia *Will Gamboa become the best Cuban pro since Jose Napoles?*	PPV	f	B+	C+	B
10/10/09	Juan Manuel Lopez W 12 Rogers Mtagwa *Was Lopez overrated, or Mtagwa underrated?*	PPV	jf	A-	B	A
10/10/09	Israel Vazquez KO 10 Angel Priolo *Comebacking Vazquez delivers excitement, but looks vulnerable*	FSN Espanol	jf	B	C-	A-
10/16/09	Antonio Pitalua KO 5 Wifredo Negron *At 39, Pitalua remains, P-4-P, one of boxing's hardest punchers*	Telemundo	w	B+	C	C+
10/17/09	Carl Froch W 12 Andre Dirrell *Froch is easily the best postfight interview of the "Super Six"*	Showtime	sm	A	A-	B-
10/17/09	Arthur Abraham KO 12 Jermain Taylor *Will an American win a fight in this tourney?*	Showtime	sm	A	B	B+

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHOWTIME

Late-sub Sims (left) gave Green a harder fight than anticipated

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Ernie Lopez, 1945-2009

In 2004, Ernie "Indian Red" Lopez got more media attention than he ever did as a top contender for the welterweight championship in the late 1960s and early'-70s. The former boxer who failed in two attempts to take the 147-pound title from Jose Napoles had taken a 30-year powder from his family and friends, and was finally tracked down at a homeless shelter in Texas and brought back to Los Angeles for his induction into the California Boxing Hall of Fame. His reappearance, gushed CNN anchorwoman Kyra Phillips, was "the story of a sports comeback made for the movies."

It had a sad ending last October 2, when the 64-year-old Lopez died of complications of dementia.

"He was a good-looking, red-headed Indian," said Don Chargin, the legendary West Coast promoter behind many of Lopez' classic fights at the Olympic Auditorium. "And he was a great fighter—a good puncher with a good chin. At any other time, he probably would have been world champion. He could beat anybody else but Napoles."

The losses to Napoles (by TKO in 15 on February 14, 1970, and KO in eight on February 28, 1973) plus a divorce were said to be the catalysts for Lopez' long disappearing act.

"It always bothered him that he couldn't beat Napoles," confirmed Chargin.

Lopez beat a lot of other good fighters after he left the Utah reservation on which he was born. He turned pro in 1964 and within two years was anointed the "newest welterweight sensation" by *Boxing Illustrated*, with the "fighting spirit to match" his fire red hair.

His three fights with Hedgeman Lewis in 1968-'69 were "epic battles," said Chargin. They split the first two at a sold-out Olympic Auditorium, and Lopez won the tiebreaker at the L.A. Forum. Lopez also defeated contenders Johnny Brooks, Tito Marshall, Musashi Nakano, Raul Soriano, Jose Stable, Manuel Gonzalez, and future junior middleweight champ Oscar Albarado.

His 47-13-1 (23) record included losses to ex-champion Emile Griffith, Armando Muniz, and future 147-pound champion John H. Stracey.

For all the excitement the older brother of 1970s featherweight champion Danny "Little Red" Lopez brought to the West Coast boxing scene, outside the ropes Lopez was "very, very quiet, with a real dry sense of humor," recalled Chargin. Sadly lacking was a sense of his own merit as a boxer. "I wasn't good enough," responded Lopez to the news that he was voted into the Golden State ring pantheon—a judgment more jarring and egregious than anything Napoles threw at him.

—Pete Ehrmann

"Indian Red" Lopez never got over loss to Napoles

Outside the Ropes

According to Philippine news sources, **Manny Pacquiao** has a new record deal, and will collaborate with composer **Lito Camo** and producer **Isaac Reain** ... In another boxing-entertainment crossover, Verdi Corrente Production, LLC plans to make a movie about the life of **Vinny Paz** in 2010 ... Meanwhile, former world super middleweight and light heavyweight champion **Joe Calzaghe** was eliminated from the British TV show *Strictly Come Dancing*. The retired boxer lost out to actress **Zoe Lucker**. "It was a blessing in disguise to be honest," said Calzaghe. "I knew I was going to lose when I saw I was up against Zoe. I really enjoyed it, but the next time I dance will probably be on the dance floor after a couple of beers" ... Former WBC heavyweight titleholder **Frank Bruno**, who has a bipolar disorder, lent his name to the launch of Leveling the Playing Field, a report that focuses on the mental health experiences of prominent athletes ... Former heavyweight contender **David Tua** has finally settled his lawsuit against former trainer **Kevin Barry** and former manager **Martin Pugh** before the case reached the High Court in Auckland, New Zealand. It is believed that Tua will get half of the $7.50-million in question ... According to the Associated Press, promoter **Mogens Palle** is suing Showtime, contending the cable network conspired to help **Mikkell Kessler** break his contract with Palle and take part in the Super Six super middleweight tournament. Palle is seeking compensatory damages exceeding $75,000 and punitive damages to be determined by a jury ... Las Vegas lawyer **Francisco Aguilar** has replaced **John Bailey** as a member of the Nevada State Athletic Commission ... Former tribal boxing commissioner **Shane David Crampton**, 38, pleaded guilty to federal wire fraud charges. Crampton demanded money from a boxing promoter in return for his promise to secure future fights for the promoter's boxers at the Little River Casino and Resort in Manistee, Michigan ... Retired British welterweight **Eamonn Magee**, 38, is accused of separate assaults on a man and woman. He is free on bail, banned from using alcohol, and ordered to have no contact with either of the alleged victims. Since retiring from the ring, Magee has worked as a trainer at Breen's Gym in Belfast, Northern Island ... A January 15 preliminary hearing has been set for trainer **Roger Mayweather**, who is accused of attacking a female boxer he once trained ... **Hector Camacho Sr.** was jailed for violating probation from a 2007 burglary conviction ... A federal appeals court ruled that former heavyweight champion **Joe Frazier** cannot sue the Oneida Indian Nation over the use of his picture to promote a bout between his daughter, **Jacqui Frazier-Lyde**, and **Liala Ali** in 2001 because of the tribes sovereign status. If Frazier wants to pursue the lawsuit, he'll have to do so in the tribe's own court ... Two-time former lightweight champion and a member of the International Boxing Hall of Fame **Ismael Laguna**, 66, suffered a heart attack and was hospitalized in Panama City ... British junior middleweight **Jason Rushton**, 26, collapsed in the dressing room following a 10th-round TKO loss to **Brian Rose** at the Bolton Arena on October 23. Rushton was rushed to the hospital, where an operation was performed to relieve the pressure caused by a brain bleed and then placed in a drug-induced coma. The defeat was Rushton's eighth in his last 10 bouts and sixth by stoppage, bringing his overall record to 18-10 (3). Rose is now 13-0-1 (4) ... South Africa's most decorated amateur boxer, **Daan Bekker**, 77, died in Pretoria in late-October. According to South African writer **Ron Jackson**, "Daan's style was never suited to the professional ranks, but he will always be remembered for his outstanding achievements as an amateur." Heavyweight Bekker's pro record was 6-2-1 (4) ... Well-regarded Philadelphia matchmaker **Harold Moore**, 77, died in late-September ... **Rudy De Leon**, 85, died of complications related to Alzheimer's disease on October 19. De Leon, Los Angeles' first Latino police captain, started a boxing club for youths in the basement of the Boyle Heights police station in 1973 in an effort to curb street-gang problems. The boxing program grew into the Hollenbeck Youth Center, which, according to the *Los Angeles Times*, has helped thousands of at-risk kids ... Thai bantamweight **Sakai Jockygym**, 19, died shortly after a 10th-round knockout defeat at the hands of **Kazuyoshi Niki** in a bout that took place in Munakata, Japan, on October 12. THE RING's Asia boxing correspondent **Joe Koizumi** reported that Jockygym had an 11-6 (5) pro record, but BoxRec.com lists the deceased boxer as 2-3 (2).

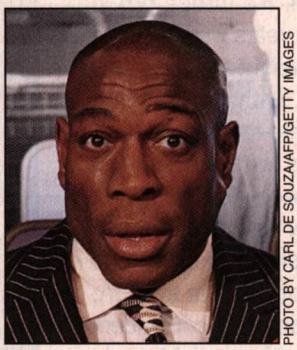
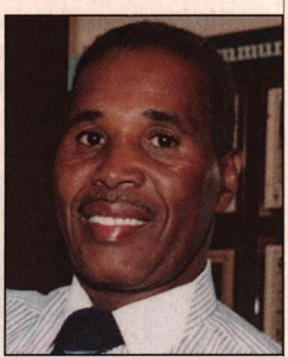


PHOTO BY CARL DE SOUZA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Bruno: Helping level the playing field



Laguna: Suffers heart attack

Quotable

"Maybe boxing is no longer my thing,"

—Forty-one-year-old Andrew Golota, stating the obvious, after being stopped in the fifth round by cruiserweight champion Tomasz Adamek.

"My advice to Jermain Taylor would be to never put on gloves again. It is clear that his punch resistance has gone. He has to call it quits."

—Former WBA featherweight titleholder Barry McGuigan's counsel to the former middleweight champion following his 12th-round TKO at the hands of Arthur Abraham.

[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended October 18, 2009

Heavyweights: No changes.
Cruiserweights: No changes.
Light Heavyweights: No changes.
Super Middleweights: Jermain Taylor (eighth last issue) departs, possibly permanently, after getting iced by Arthur Abraham, who debuts at 168 at six. Abraham's showing pushes down Allan Green (sixth last issue) and Robert Stieglitz (seventh last issue) one place each.
Middleweights: No changes.
Junior Middleweights: Sergio Mora (fifth last issue) exits due to inactivity, enabling everyone rated six to 10 to move up one place each and makes room for Yuri Foreman to enter at 10.
Welterweights: No changes.
Junior Welterweights: No changes.
Lightweights: No changes.
Junior Lightweights: Juan Carlos Salgado makes an abrupt debut at junior lightweight, thanks to his one-round stoppage of Jorge Linares (seventh last issue), who drops to eight. Nicky Cook (eighth last issue) exits, after going 2-2 over his last four fights, and getting stopped by Roman Martinez in his last outing.
Featherweights: No changes.
Junior Featherweights: Toshiaki Nishioka (fifth last issue) switches places with Steve Molitor (fourth last issue) based on quality of opposition.
Bantamweights: Roberto Vasquez (ninth last issue) exits after losing his second-straight fight and third in his last six. Vasquez' exit pushes up Fernando Montiel (10th last issue) one spot, and makes room for Sasha Bakhtin to re-enter the ratings at 10.
Junior Bantamweights: Nubio Nashiro (third last issue) moves to second and Hugo Cazares (seventh last issue) leaps to four after Nashiro and Cazares fought to a draw. The move allows Simphiwe Nongqayi (fourth last issue) to move to three, while Alexander Munoz (second last issue) sinks to five, where Dimitri Kirlov departs due to inactivity. Daiki Kameda (seventh last issue) drops to eight, and Nonito Donaire (ninth last issue) rises to seven. Donaire's move up promotes Marvin Sonsona (10th last issue) to nine and allows Drian Francisco to enter at 10.
Flyweights: No changes.
Junior Flyweights: No changes.
Strawweights: No changes.
Pound-for pound: There is some serious reshuffling in the pound-for-pound ratings. Nonito Donaire (eighth last issue), Miguel Cotto (ninth last issue), and Celestino Caballero (10th last issue), each jump up two places each, as Israel Vazquez (sixth last issue) and Rafael Marquez (seventh last issue) both plummet three places. The reason for the change is that Vazquez and Marquez have not fought quality opposition since they fought each other in March 2008, whereas Donaire, Cotto, and Caballero have continued beating solid opposition during that time.

Pound-For-Pound

1. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Welterweight
2. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
3. **Shane Mosley**
   Welterweight
4. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
5. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Lightweight
6. **Nonito Donaire**
   Junior Bantamweight
7. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
8. **Celestino Caballero**
   Junior Featherweight
9. **Israel Vazquez**
   Featherweight
10. **Rafael Marquez**
    Featherweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **ringtv.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended October 18, 2009

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by THE RING are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between THE RING's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

THE RING Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of THE RING Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at ringtv.com.

Records provided by boxrec.com.

PHOTO BY MATTHIAS KERNS/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Arthur Abraham made a big splash at super middleweight, debuting at number six after knocking out Jermain Taylor

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO
Ukraine 53-3 (47)

1. **VITALI KLITSCHKO**
Ukraine 38-2 (37)
2. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN**
Russia 17-0 (12)
3. **EDDIE CHAMBERS**
Philadelphia, PA 35-1 (18)
4. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV**
Uzbekistan 25-1-1 (17)
5. **NICOLAY VALUEV**
Russia 50-1 (34)
6. **CHRIS ARREOLA**
Riverside, CA 27-1 (24)
7. **DENIS BOYTSOV**
Russia 26-0 (21)
8. **DAVID HAYE**
England 22-1 (21)
9. **ALEXANDER DIMITRENKO**
Ukraine 29-1 (19)
10. **KEVIN JOHNSON**
Atlanta, GA 22-0-1 (9)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 37-1 (27)
2. **CORY SPINKS**
St. Louis, MO 37-5 (11)
3. **VERNO PHILLIPS**
Belize 42-11-1 (21)
4. **SERGIO MARTINEZ**
Argentina 44-1-2 (24)
5. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK**
Ukraine 36-0 (22)
6. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 32-2-1 (28)
7. **DEANDRE LATIMORE**
St. Louis, MO 20-2 (16)
8. **JAMIE MOORE**
England 32-3 (23)
9. **ALFREDO ANGULO**
Mexico 16-1 (13)
10. **YURI FOREMAN**
Belarus 27-0 (8)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN**
Indonesia 43-0-2 (22)
2. **STEVEN LUEVANO**
La Puente, CA 37-1-1 (15)
3. **CRISTOBAL CRUZ**
Mexico 39-11-1 (23)
4. **JORGE SOLIS**
Mexico 37-2-2 (27)
5. **ROCKY JUAREZ**
Houston, TX 28-5-1 (20)
6. **MARIO SANTIAGO**
Puerto Rico 20-1-1 (14)
7. **MARTIN HONORIO**
Mexico 25-4-1 (13)
8. **RYOL LI LEE**
Japan 13-1-1 (7)
9. **ELIO ROJAS**
Dominican Republic 21-1 (13)
10. **YURIORKIS GAMBOA**
Cuba 16-0 (14)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CELESTINO CABALLERO**
Panama 33-2 (23)
2. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM**
Thailand 39-1 (28)
3. **JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ**
Puerto Rico 27-0 (24)
4. **TOSHIAKI NISHIOKA**
Japan 35-4-3 (22)
5. **STEVE MOLITOR**
Canada 30-1 (12)
6. **BERNARD DUNNE**
Ireland 28-2 (15)
7. **RICARDO CORDOBA**
Panama 35-2-2 (22)
8. **JEFF MATHEBULA**
South Africa 22-2-2 (12)
9. **ANTONIO ESCALANTE**
Mexico 21-2 (13)
10. **RENDALL MUNROE**
England 19-1 (8)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA**
Japan 27-2 (11)
2. **ANSELMO MORENO**
Panama 27-1-1 (9)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO**
Ukraine 21-2-2 (7)
4. **JOSEPH AGBEKO**
Ghana 27-1 (22)
5. **YONNHY PEREZ**
Colombia 19-0 (14)
6. **SILENCE MABUZA**
South Africa 22-3 (18)
7. **NEHOMAR CERMENO**
Venezuela 18-0 (10)
8. **ABNER MARES**
Mexico 19-0 (12)
9. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 39-2-2 (29)
10. **SASHA BAKHTIN**
Russia 23-0 (10)

Cruiserweights

Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: TOMASZ ADAMEK
Poland 39-1 (27)

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 22-2 (11)
2. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 41-2-1 (31)
3. **GUILLERMO JONES**
Panama 36-3-2 (28)
4. **GIACOBBE FRAGOMENI**
Italy 26-1-1 (10)
5. **MARCO HUCK**
Yugoslavia 26-1 (20)
6. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 29-4-1 (18)
7. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 26-1-1 (19)
8. **TROY ROSS**
Canada 22-1 (15)
9. **OLA AFOLABI**
England 14-1-3 (6)
10. **MATT GODFREY**
Providence, RI 20-1 (10)

Light Heavyweights

Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **BERNARD HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 49-5-1 (32)
2. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 28-0 (17)
3. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Jamaica 49-12-2 (33)
4. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 30-0 (17)
5. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 27-6 (19)
6. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 54-5 (40)
7. **TAVORIS CLOUD**
Tallahassee, FL 20-0 (18)
8. **JEAN PASCAL**
Haiti 24-1 (16)
9. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Romania 26-1 (15)
10. **YUSAF MACK**
Philadelphia, PA 28-2-2 (17)

Super Middleweights

Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 42-1 (32)
2. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Romania 24-0 (19)
3. **CARL FROCH**
England 26-0 (21)
4. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 28-2 (21)
5. **SAKIO BIKA**
Cameroon 28-3-2 (19)
6. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Armenia 31-0 (25)
7. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 29-1 (20)
8. **ROBERT STIEGLITZ**
Germany 36-2 (22)
9. **ANDRE WARD**
Oakland, CA 20-0 (13)
10. **KAROLY BALZSAY**
Hungary 21-1 (15)

Middleweights

Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 35-1 (31)

1. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 33-2-1 (14)
2. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 32-3 (15)
3. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 37-1 (27)
4. **KHOREN GEVOR**
Armenia 30-4 (16)
5. **DAVID LOPEZ**
Mexico 38-12 (23)
6. **MATTHEW MACKLIN**
England 25-2 (18)
7. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 36-3 (23)
8. **DANIEL GEALE**
Australia 21-1 (13)
9. **SEBASTIAN ZBIK**
Germany 27-0 (10)
10. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-5-1 (25)

Welterweights

Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 46-5 (39)
2. **FLOYD MAYWEATHER**
Grand Rapids, MI 40-0 (25)
3. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 34-1 (27)
4. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Ghana 35-3 (20)
5. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 37-6 (27)
6. **ANDRE BERTO**
Winter Haven, FL 25-0 (19)
7. **CARLOS QUINTANA**
Puerto Rico 26-2 (20)
8. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 30-4 (15)
9. **ISAAC HLATSWAYO**
South Africa 29-1-1 (10)
10. **VYACHESLAV SENCHENKO**
Ukraine 30-0 (20)

Jr. Welterweights

Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: MANNY PACQUIAO
Philippines 49-3-2 (37)

1. **TIMOTHY BRADLEY**
Palm Springs, CA 24-0 (11)
2. **RICKY HATTON**
England 45-2 (32)
3. **AMIR KHAN**
England 21-1 (15)
4. **DEVON ALEXANDER**
St. Louis, MO 19-0 (12)
5. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 35-2 (17)
6. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
Brooklyn, NY 26-3 (5)
7. **JUAN URANGO**
Colombia 22-2-1 (17)
8. **KENDALL HOLT**
Paterson, NJ 25-3 (13)
9. **MARCOS MAIDANA**
Argentina 26-1 (25)
10. **ANDREAS KOTELNIK**
Ukraine 31-3-1 (13)

Lightweights

Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ
Mexico 50-5-1 (37)

1. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 25-0 (25)
2. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 26-2 (21)
3. **ROLANDO REYES**
Mexico 31-4-2 (20)
4. **ALI FUNEKA**
South Africa 30-2-2 (25)
5. **MIGUEL VAZQUEZ**
Mexico 25-3 (12)
6. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
Washington, DC 29-0 (19)
7. **PAULUS MOSES**
Namibia 25-0 (17)
8. **MIGUEL ACOSTA**
Venezuela 26-3-2 (20)
9. **ANTONIO DEMARCO**
Mexico 22-1-1 (16)
10. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 35-2-1 (17)

Jr. Lightweights

Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 49-7-2 (32)
2. **ROBERT GUERRERO**
Gilroy, CA 24-1-1 (16)
3. **MZONKE FANA**
South Africa 29-4 (12)
4. **ROMAN MARTINEZ**
Puerto Rico 23-0-1 (14)
5. **MALCOLM KLASSEN**
South Africa 24-5-2 (15)
6. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 36-4-1 (19)
7. **JUAN CARLOS SALGADO**
Mexico 21-0-1 (15)
8. **JORGE LINARES**
Venezuela 27-1 (18)
9. **HUMBERTO GUTIERREZ**
Mexico 26-1-1 (19)
10. **KEVIN MITCHELL**
England 29-0 (22)

Jr. Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Armenia 32-2-1 (26)
2. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 13-1-1 (8)
3. **SIMPHIWE NONGQAYI**
South Africa 16-0 (6)
4. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 30-6-2 (22)
5. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 33-3 (27)
6. **KOHEI KONO**
Japan 24-4 (8)
7. **NONITO DONAIRE**
Philippines 22-1 (14)
8. **DAIKI KAMEDA**
Japan 14-2 (10)
9. **MARVIN SONSONA**
Philippines 14-0 (12)
10. **DRIAN FRANCISCO**
Philippines 18-0-1 (14)

Flyweights

Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 35-2-3 (22)
2. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 73-3-1 (39)
3. **DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT**
Thailand 48-1-1 (20)
4. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
Argentina 30-0-2 (19)
5. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 35-5-2 (16)
6. **KOKI KAMEDA**
Japan 21-0 (14)
7. **MORUTI MTHALANE**
South Africa 23-2 (16)
8. **JULIO CESAR MIRANDA**
Mexico 29-4-1 (22)
9. **LUIS CONCEPCION**
Panama 18-1 (13)
10. **ZOLANI TETE**
South Africa 11-0 (10)

Jr. Flyweights

Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 33-0-1 (6)

1. **BRIAN VILORIA**
Waipahu, HI 26-2 (15)
2. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 37-5 (21)
3. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Mexico 21-1-1 (17)
4. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 29-2-2 (20)
5. **CESAR CANCHILA**
Colombia 28-2 (22)
6. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 28-3-1 (11)
7. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
Argentina 20-1 (10)
8. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 25-4-1 (19)
9. **JUANITO RUBILLAR**
Philippines 47-13-7 (23)
10. **YASUTAKA KUROKI**
Japan 21-3-1 (14)

Strawweights

Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
Nicaragua 24-0 (20)
2. **RAUL GARCIA**
Mexico 27-0-1 (16)
3. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 31-0 (12)
4. **NKOSINATHI JOYI**
South Africa 20-0 (15)
5. **MILAN MELINDO**
Philippines 18-0 (5)
6. **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines 25-1-3 (14)
7. **FLORANTE CONDES**
Philippines 23-5-1 (20)
8. **JUAN PALACIOS**
Nicaragua 26-2 (21)
9. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 62-8-5 (31)
10. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 23-4 (9)

By Jeff Ryan

You've Got Some Splainin' To Do

Mike Tyson appeared as a guest on *Oprah* twice in one week in October. But while the presence of the former heavyweight king on a mainstream talk show would normally have its producer, director, host, and sponsors praying, crossing their fingers, and holding their collective breath like Michael Phelps during the 100-meter butterfly, there was actually little fear that Tyson could do anything to shock or embarrass Oprah Winfrey and Co. Two recent *Oprah* guests, after all, were Mehmet Oz, a doctor who plays show-and-tell on the air with real human organs, and actress Mackenzie Phillips, who spent an hour detailing how she and her father engaged in consensual sex for years.

As Charles Manson once remarked during a jailhouse interview, being crazy used to mean something. Now, *everyone's* crazy.

That's not to say that Tyson didn't provide plenty of drama. He was as compelling as ever, mainly because he has always lacked that filtering mechanism all image-conscious celebrities possess, and is painfully candid. For his *Oprah* encore, none other than his old nemesis/conqueror/cannibalism victim, Evander Holyfield, joined him onstage. The reunion was set up at Holyfield's insistence, and while Tyson didn't apologize for his infamous ear bite in so many words, he did say to his rival, "This is a beautiful guy. It's been a pleasure passing through life being acquainted with you." Holyfield expressed forgiveness and, after Winfrey referred to the youth violence rampant in her adopted hometown of Chicago, added, "Tell kids if we can come together, we know you can come together."

Surprisingly, what started out as a single interview to plug the DVD release of the documentary, *Tyson*, actually turned into two days of meaningful television. (That's usually an oxymoron.) "Leg-Iron Mike" and "The Real Deal" making nice had me thinking that it's too bad we don't get to witness some other examples of long-overdue ring reconciliation. Maybe the *Oprah* staff would want to cue the old B. J. Thomas tune, "Hey, Won't You Play Another Somebody Done Somebody Wrong Song," and set up these awkward, but necessary, reunions:

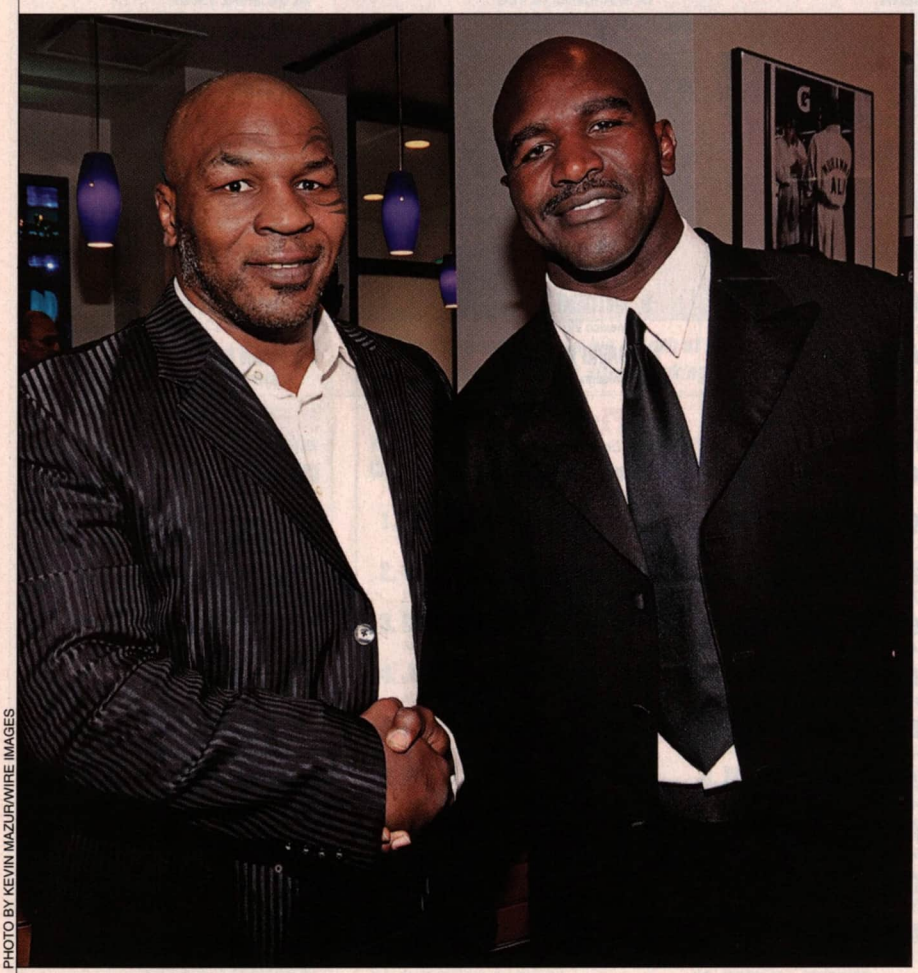


PHOTO BY KEVIN MAZUR/WIRE IMAGES

Mike and Evander: Together again, thanks to Oprah

• **Antonio Margarito and Shane Mosley:** "Sugar Shane" is your typical laidback Californian, and he never got too riled over the fact that Margarito was caught with plaster of Paris in his gloves before their battle this past January. In fact, Mosley has even given Margarito the benefit of the doubt, theorizing that the Mexican was merely trying to add extra protection to his previously wounded hands.

Well, let's have Margarito look Mosley in the eye and try to make that claim. Or let's see him admit that he was looking for an unfair advantage. Maybe Winfrey could run a tape of Luis Resto battering the face of Billy Collins Jr. Then she could ask Margarito this: How could you have planned to go into

the ring with loaded gloves, fully aware that you could have inflicted severe facial injuries or even brain damage on another human being?

•**Muhammad Ali and Ernie Terrell:** Remember the Ali-Joe Frazier Reconciliation Tour? Well, despite the handshakes, apologies, and apparent burying of various hatchets through the years, it was clear in that HBO documentary on "The Thrilla in Manila" that Frazier remains very bitter toward his tormentor. So let's instead reunite Ali and another victim of his cruelty, Terrell.

In their 1967 bout, Terrell was unnecessarily punished because he had insisted on calling Ali by his given name, Cassius Clay. ("What's my name, Uncle Tom?" Ali yelled repeatedly, as he landed his blows.) A sit-down would provide Ali with the opportunity to explain how, as a supposed man of peace, he could be so mean just because somebody referred to him by the name on his birth certificate. And Terrell could let us know what was so difficult about calling a man by the name he preferred.

•**Andrew Golota and Riddick Bowe:** This would make for a fun little "long-time-no-see." On two occasions in 1996, first in Madison Square Garden and then in Atlantic City, Golota nearly did as much damage to a pair of jewels as a diamond cutter with astigmatism. Twice (that's right, *twice*) the Pole was disqualified for pounding Bowe below the belt. The first incident sparked a Garden riot that involved flying chairs, toppled tables, a stormed ring, and Golota getting hammered in the back of the head with a portable phone by one of the goons in Bowe's entourage.

This would be an interesting revisiting of the circumstances and provide insight into how Golota could repeatedly mistake a pair of trunks for a guy's chin. Would the two men embrace or merely greet each other with a fist bump? In case it would be the latter, Bowe would be wise to wear a protective cup under his slacks. We've seen Golota's aim.

•**Tyson and Frans Botha:** "Kid Dynamite" back for a third go-round with the queen of daytime television? Why the heck not? This time, he'd have to tell us, and Botha, why he tried to actually break the arm of a foe that had no chance of beating him. If the Tyson meltdown against Holyfield was Chernobyl, then this was at least Three Mile Island.

•**Hiduad Larbi, Bob Kasule, Alberto Duran, and Roy Jones:** Since there's no logical explanation for how Jones got shafted in his 1988 Olympic gold medal bout against South Korea's Park Si Hun in Seoul, judges Larbi, Kasule, and Duran should simply put bags over their heads, extend their hands to Jones, and plead for forgiveness.

•**Bernard Hopkins and Luis Fortuno:** Mr. Fortuno is the Governor of Puerto Rico, the highest-ranking official on the island. He'd probably like to hear why "B-Hop" felt it necessary to twice toss a Puerto Rican flag to the ground while hyping his showdown with Felix Trinidad.

•**Roberto Duran and Ken Buchanan:** Twenty-four years before Golota-Bowe, the Garden established itself as *The Nutcracker* Suite of boxing when Duran fired one of his hands of stone into the groin of the man he was in the midst of dethroning for the lightweight championship. Referee Johnny LoBianco didn't have the balls, uh, no pun intended, to disqualify Duran for the shot that landed when the two warriors continued fighting after the bell ended round 13, so Buchanan's inability to continue resulted in his TKO defeat. And, unfortunately, there would be no rematch.

Somehow, it's hard to imagine Duran ever saying, "I'm sorry," in English *or* Spanish.

•**Duran and the rest of us:** Since all of the world's fight fans can't fit into Winfrey's studio, Duran can simply look into the TV camera and, once and for all, tell us why he said, "No Mas" in New Orleans. Was it because he did actually have stomach cramps? Because he was frustrated by Sugar Ray Leonard's movement? Because he felt humiliated by Leonard's mugging and the way he dropped his hands and dared Duran to hit him? Maybe it's time for Duran to acknowledge how much he disappointed those of us who shelled out big bucks for the closed-circuit telecast and then felt completely hosed.

Uh, not that we're still holding a grudge or anything. If we've learned anything from Oprah, Mike, and Commander 'Vander, it's that there's no point in doing that. ■

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Maybe the time is right for Golota to apologize to Bowe

By Ivan Goldman

Justice, "Dirty Harry" Style

Sure, Andre Dirrell got robbed, but there were extenuating circumstances. Namely, he spent most of 12 rounds trying not to fight Carl Froch. Dirrell acted like someone who'd accidentally wandered in between badminton sets and assumed it was the referee's job to stop some crazy limey from beating him up.

Was Dirrell the victim of street justice?

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

But let's not kid ourselves. If you look at the rules, the two judges who scored it for Froch were way outside the base path. The round goes to the effective puncher, even if he is mostly running, grabbing, and complaining to the ref. And Froch barely landed a clean, effective punch all night.

The gist of the evening is that when Dirrell refused to engage, Froch fought dirty, referee Hector Afu let him, and two of the judges tore up the scoring rules and invented their own, providing Froch with a split decision and two points in the Super Six super middleweight tournament. Many called it a Nottingham, England, hometown decision. But I'm not sure we could say with exactitude that the two (foreign) judges in question would have scored it for Froch if the fighting styles were reversed. What they did is dispense street justice, Dirty Harry style.

A better solution existed. Afu could have visited Dirrell's corner between rounds and emphatically explained that if he didn't start fighting he'd face disqualification. Had Dirrell responded properly, he might very well be sitting on a victory instead of his first loss.

The way it worked out isn't exactly commendable, but not terribly disturbing either. Would it have been so wrong to apply this kind of extralegal justice, for example, when Floyd Mayweather spent 11½ rounds making sure a fight never broke out between him and Oscar De La Hoya? You tell me.

A grievously wrong note was struck at the start of the tournament, but not in the Dirrell-Froch contest. It's when Jermain Taylor, who fought valiantly and well most of the fight, once again ended up helpless in the championship rounds, which got him brutally kayoed by a tremendous right from Arthur Abraham. There's no entertainment value in watching this fine young gentleman get hurt this badly fight after fight. He can't seem to protect himself in the late

PHOTO BY MICHAEL GOTTSCHALK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Let's hope this is the last time we see Taylor in this position

rounds and has suffered three thunderous knockouts in his last five contests.

Plenty of analysts have already asserted that "Bad Intentions" should quit, making me sound like a rerun, but this point is too important not to make: Taylor should forge a new life plan that doesn't involve competing in boxing matches. I hope he's done it by the time you read this because he's on a dangerous, downward slope, and we don't need to see the rest. He can't afford any more paralyzing concussions.

Super Six Promise: Readers may expect a certain degree of skepticism and perhaps even downright cynicism in this space, but I must admit that though the Super Six tournament might have a few nicks and dings here and there, I can't find one profoundly negative thing to say about this exceedingly satisfactory vehicle. Put me down as a believer. Showtime's made a big bet on boxing and will deserve its ratings, which I hope and expect will soar.

The tournament runs on a simple premise that allows fighters to follow their instincts and fight. They don't have to worry about deal making because the deals have been pretty much made already. Their managers and promoters can get only a little cagey within the broad outlines of the setup. Contestants must take what comes, and if they lose one bout, they know it won't be the end of the world because everyone's in tough and other contestants will probably lose too. The modified round-robin format makes win-and-loss columns more like those in baseball, where even the greatest of teams can't win them all, but after that last out in the World Series, it's a safe bet that the deserving team will be soaked in champagne.

This endorsement, by the way, is in no way a condemnation of Showtime's chief rival HBO. Though HBO appears to

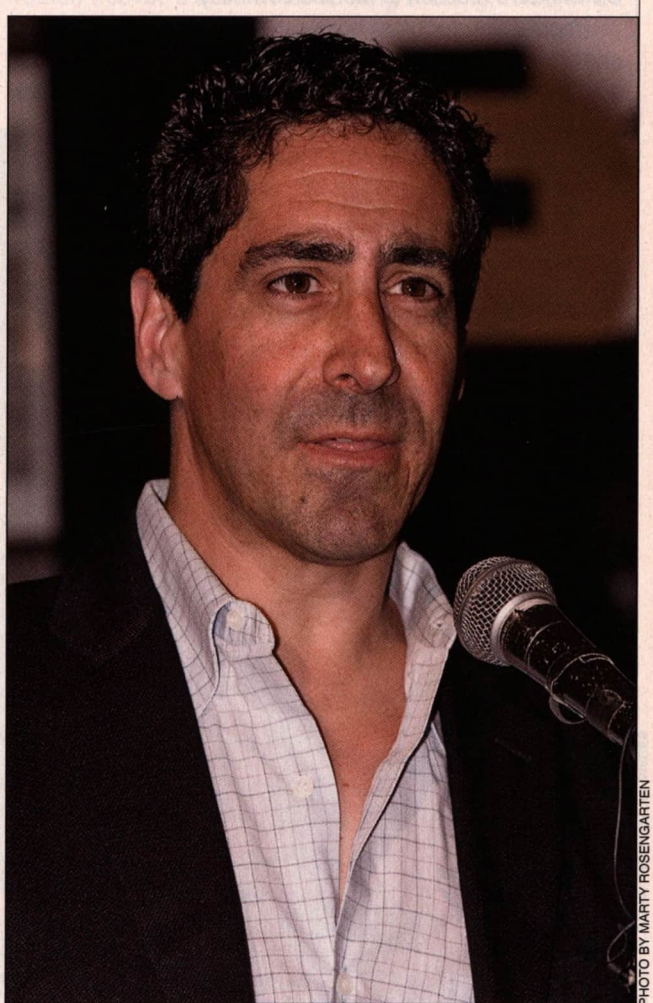


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Showtime's Ken Hershman played a big role in creating Super Six

have lost its way here and there, the hope is that it will find its way back and outwork Showtime down the road—for a while. If these two networks keep one-upping each other, we can't lose.

California Craziness: I'm not making this up. Dave Thornton, who recently parachuted in to serve as acting executive officer of the state commission, told me that no one filling his position would need to know much about boxing. Honest, that's what he said. Thornton came out of retirement from the state bureaucracy to keep the seat warm for whoever comes next, and as we discussed qualifications for his successor, I pointed out that a deep knowledge of the sport was paramount. That's when he answered, and I quote, "I beg to differ with you on that. Boxing is not rocket science. You can learn the profession. You need to understand how to run a regulatory agency."

If you think those are wacky ideas, you won't get any argument from me, but I should add that Thornton seems intelligent and also a pretty nice guy. Bear in mind that he didn't have to return my call. He just doesn't happen to know what he's talking about, which is not so unusual. Intelligent people exhibit unintelligent behavior all the time. Note, for example, Bill Clinton's reaction to Monica Lewinsky.

People who regulate boxing need to know how to think one step ahead of 100,000 possible scams that could involve medical reports from Mexico or some slimeball trying to jimmy a scale. Meanwhile, the acting chief inspector testified at an open hearing this year that a fighter's fist should be wrapped with 30 yards of gauze and 30 feet of tape. (It's actually ten yards of gauze and two yards of tape). Thirty feet of tape would turn the fist into something the size of a soccer ball. Such confusion wouldn't be so bad if the same inspector hadn't been assigned to supervise the wrapping of Antonio "Master Of Plaster" Margarito versus Shane Mosley.

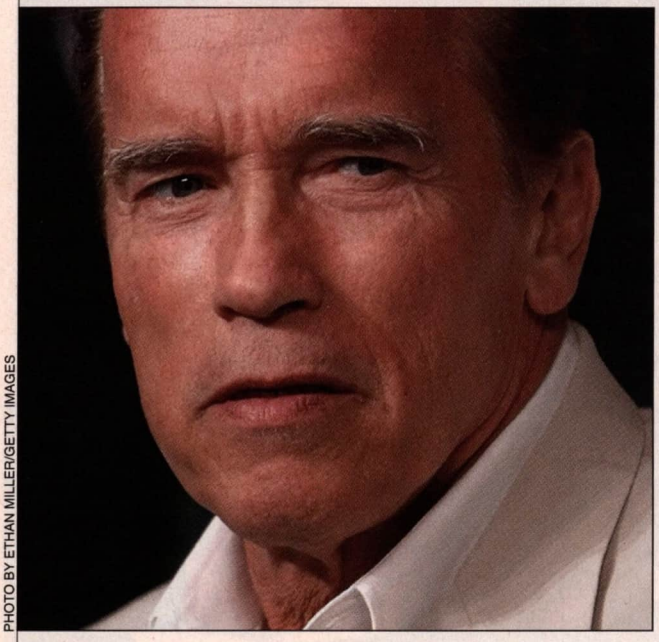


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Schwarzenegger's boxing commission is in disarray

PHOTO BY ALEX CUAREZMA/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Guerrero: Caught in the middle of contractual tug of war

Thornton's misguided reading of what it takes to regulate boxing matches is backed up by his superiors in the shadowy folds of state government. It would be nice if California's cluelessness was unique, but casual strolls through government offices in other states would no doubt reveal that they also use their boxing bureaucracies as receptacles for dimwitted nephews.

The announcement inviting applications for Thornton's position is online. I won't actually quote from it because it's incredibly boring, but what's important about it is that it doesn't require even a rudimentary knowledge of boxing.

All these regulatory gnomes clinging to the government network like bats hanging upside down in a darkened cave are pets of California's Department of Consumer Affairs,

which is best known for allowing thieving, dope-addled, possibly homicidal nurses to remain licensed and working year after year until finally the *Los Angeles Times* revealed some of the most grievous cases in a series of articles earlier this year. That forced Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to poke his head out of the tanning salon and get rid of a few of the most glaring idiots.

California's boxing regulators are bossed by an "acting" executive again because Consumer Affairs chief Brian Stigar nixed the commission's unanimous choice, longtime referee Pat Russell. Instead, the job must go, Stigar said, to someone who has a "proven and demonstrated ability to effectively manage a complex government program." Sure, just like the people who were supervising nursing regulation.

In recent years, a fighter with hepatitis C was allowed to box in California. Another was HIV positive. Promoters complain that they hand the state a big chunk of the gate to ensure the safety of their licensees, but the state can't keep its end of the deal. When Margarito's trainer was caught trying to load his gloves, that was a crime, but no one from the commission called the cops, and no one thought to establish a chain of custody. No one thought to withhold the purse either.

Thanks to the ineptitude of commission staff, Robert "The Ghost" Guerrero lost valuable time from his career while a tug of war raged between Golden Boy and Goossen-Tutor, both of them claiming to have a valid contract. The two promoters agreed to let commission staff arbitrate their quarrel, but a state Superior Court judge had to vacate the arbitration ruling, saying it was tainted "by corruption, fraud, or other undue means." I hope Guerrero's case is settled by the time you read this.

"I never heard anybody say anything bad about Pat," said longtime promoter Don Chargin. "People who don't usually agree on much agree he's right for the job. It used to be that people were selected on the basis of their ability and knowledge of boxing."

Russell, who's hired a lawyer to represent him, said it's clear that the Consumer Affairs perpetrators plan "to move all of their dead wood in and out" of the athletic office "whenever they want to." Russell, who commanded a rifle platoon in Vietnam, retired as a detective sergeant in San Diego said, "I spent my life chasing people doing sociopathic and criminal acts. Think I'm going to stop now?"

Futch: To Thomas Hauser of secondsout.com, who carefully monitored *The New York Times* for 100 days and pointed out that the alleged best daily in America failed to mention New Yorker Paul Maglinaggi's contest against Houston's Juan Diaz on the day of the fight and failed to report the outcome the next day. Imagine *The Times* failing to cover a Yankees-Texas Rangers game. The paper wouldn't cover a card at B. B. King's, a nightclub three blocks from its offices. Miguel Cotto, who's filled Madison Square Garden, can't even get *The Times* to cover his New York press conferences. Attaboy, Hauser. ■

PHOTO BY JOE CORDOVA

The New York Times *didn't even cover Malignaggi's fight with Diaz*

[Camera Clicks]

PHOTO BY MIGUEL VILLAGRAN/GETTY IMAGES

Visiting fighters have learned over the years how difficult it is to beat a German boxer in Germany, but we think we've finally discovered the secret: Schedule the fight for October, when Oktoberfest is in full swing and no German can rightly be expected to lay off the beer in training. The lushes in question here are middleweight Sebastian Zbik and super middle Juergen Braehmer, two fighters who presumably had no bouts scheduled at the time.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN/RINGSIDE PHOTOS

A dispute over who was the reigning king of the "Camera Click" erupted recently between boxing photographers Ed Mulholland and Chris Farina, but while they duked it out, Marty Rosengarten showed why he's the true king of Clicks, nailing the shot while his ringside pals goofed off on the job.

PHOTO BY SANDRA MU/GETTY IMAGES

Anyone still wondering where David Tua's power comes from? Wow, the last time we saw a pair of legs like that, Summer Bird was racing to victory in the Belmont Stakes.

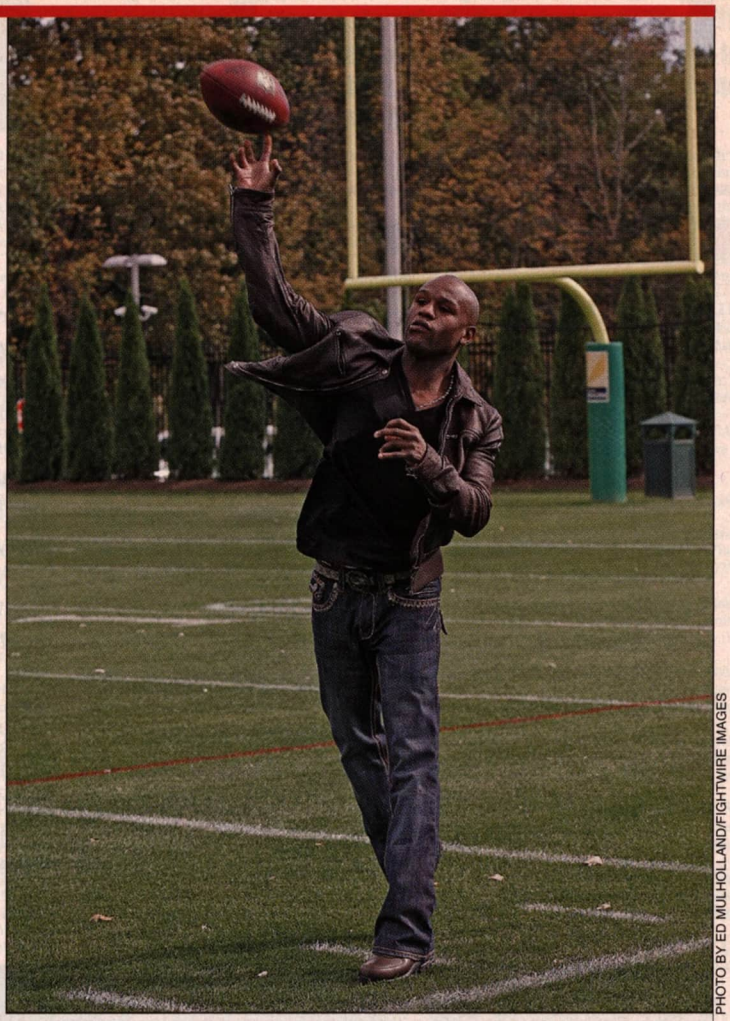


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

So it turns out Floyd Mayweather can throw other things up in the air besides just $100 bills. No truth to the rumor that shortly after tossing this one successful tight spiral, Mayweather promptly declared himself the "greatest quarterback of all-time." But there is truth to the rumor that whatever Mayweather did say, Leonard Ellerbe agreed with him.

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

We know what you're thinking: pink gloves … pink skirt … geez, Hector Camacho Jr. finally trimmed down that midriff of his! Actually, while a sports bra probably wouldn't be the worst idea in the world for Camacho, this is in fact a picture of a female boxer, flyweight standout Susi Kentikian of Germany. "The Killer Queen" won a unanimous decision over previously unbeaten countrywoman Julia Sahin in October.

By Tim Starks
PHOTOS BY DWIGHT MCCANN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Chris Avalos Bantamweight

Chris Avalos was a hyper boy, prone to scrapping with other kids who tried to bully him because of his attention deficit disorder. He took medication for a while, but his parents wanted him off it. A doctor advised finding Avalos a hobby to burn his excess energy, and that's when, fittingly, he turned to boxing.

Avalos, 20, is still a hyper kid, and it shows in how he fights: Nothing burns energy like recklessly trading punches, slugging it out until either he or his opponent can't anymore. Because of one-shot power rare in the bantamweight division, so far it's been Avalos' opponents who have failed to remain standing.

But once again, he and his family are searching for ways to settle him down.

For the sake of his mother screaming 10 rows back from the ring, his nervous promoter, even for the sake of his win-loss record and career longevity, Avalos might do better to box more, brawl less.

Thus far, he has not been able to contain himself. That's been a good thing for fans of exciting fights, such as the rollicking four rounds of action he and Giovanni Caro gave *ShoBox* viewers in September. Eventually Avalos delivered a sweeping right hook for a highlight-reel knockout, but not before surviving a few hairy moments.

Avalos calls himself a "brawler-boxer." He usually starts off a boxer and turns into a brawler. He arrives with a plan, but then something clicks inside him that he doesn't understand, and suddenly he's swapping blows.

"If you're his trainer or his manager, you want the longer career," said Steve Farhood, a *ShoBox* commentator. "If

(Continued on Page 110)

Pro Record

2008		
Feb. 1	Juan Guerrero, Hinckley, MN	KO 3
March 1	Constancio Alvarado, Carson, CA	KO 1
May 2	Ernie Marquez, Santa Ynez, CA	W 4
May 17	Alvaro Muro, Primm, NV	KO 1
June 27	Christian Cruz, Ft. Lauderdale, FL	KO 1
Sept. 5	Jose Albuquerque, Primm	KO 4
Oct. 11	Ernie Marquez, Las Vegas, NV	W 6
Dec. 5	Brandon Quintana, Santa Ynez	KO 1
2009		
Feb. 7	Torrence Daniels, Anaheim, CA	KO 7
May 1	Cesar Lopez, Santa Ynez	KO 1
July 31	Andre Wilson, Temecula, CA	KO 2
Sept. 18	Giovanni Caro, Santa Ynez	KO 4

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
12	12	0	0	10

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March 1988: Thomas "Hit Man" Hearns: "Now I Own History." Plus: Lockridge & Mayweather, Tony Burton, Julio Cesar Chavez, blood.

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HEY FLOYD, DON'T BE ANOTHER ROY JONES

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By Joseph Santoliquito

It was hard to tell exactly who it was under the flowing black locks—a bad female impersonator or someone desperate for attention. But there stood Roy Jones, wearing a ruffled pirate shirt, wig, and plastic hook, trying to build up steam for a fight not many seemed to care about in the first place, his August 15 bout with Jeff Lacy.

Who thought they'd ever see Jones dressed in a buccaneer ensemble trying to hawk a fight? It's what happens when you have to reach for attention—not be the center of it.

Could Floyd Mayweather be headed in the same direction as Jones? Before you dismiss the notion, don't forget the wacky gladiator costume Mayweather wore into the ring for the Carlos Baldomir fight.

You don't have to peel away very many layers before you find similar patterns between Jones and Mayweather. One look at their career trajectories reveals they have plenty in common.

Both medaled at the Olympics. Both lost childhoods under the strain of domineering, success-driven fathers. Consequently, both severed ties with their demanding patriarchs only to later rekindle the relationships. Both failed to take risks when they were dominating inferior opponents. Both are headed to the Hall of Fame, but one may be far more appreciated than the other by the time their careers are over and their successes are measured side-by-side.

It's too late for Roy Jones to go back and retool, too late for him to stretch the greatness that at one time most everyone in boxing bestowed on him. But it's not too late for Mayweather to take full advantage of his phenomenal talent.

Maybe Mayweather should take Jones' template for success, examine it carefully, and then smash it on the floor. As things stand today, Mayweather is looking at all-time great status, providing he doesn't go down the same path as Jones.

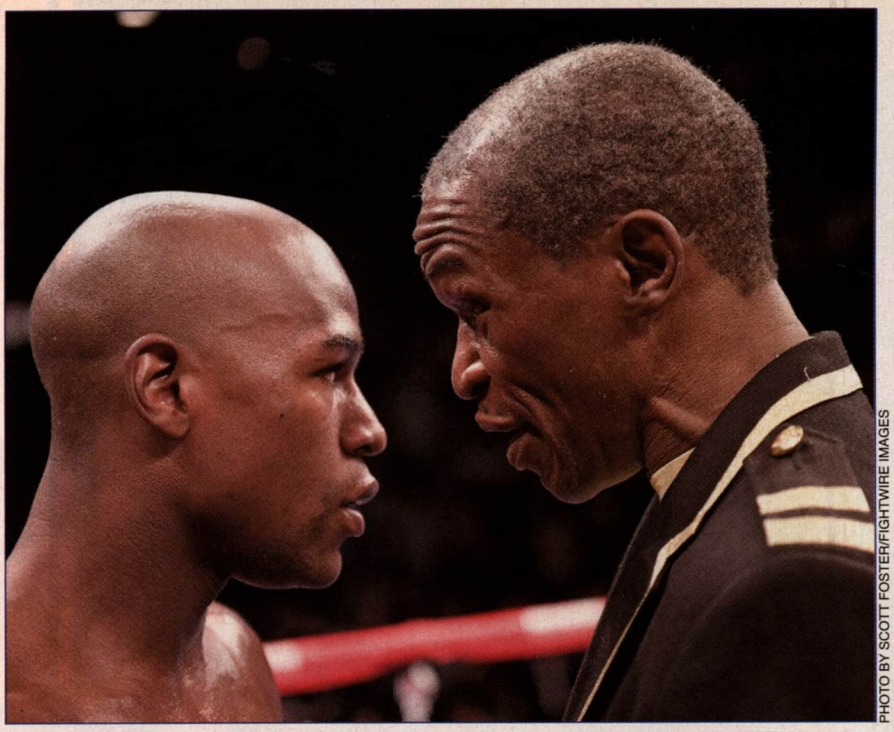
There are many parallels between Mayweather and Jones, and not all of them are flattering. But the younger, fresher, better-schooled Mayweather has an opportunity to eclipse Jones. Nonetheless, wearing weird costumes, as Jones did during the build-up to his match with Jeff Lacy, and Mayweather did for his match with Carlos Baldomir, isn't the way to go.

Yes, Jones achieved many things during his prime, but the ugly "what-if" tag will always pock his career. The supposed "Superman" never achieved all he was capable of achieving, and he has nobody but himself to blame. Mayweather, on the other hand, can still make the detour that will take him to a place where he'll never have to look back and wish he'd pushed himself to the max. Money is nice, but legacy is something you can't buy, regardless of how many millions you have in the bank.

So let's contrast and compare the careers of Jones and Mayweather, and see what conclusions can be drawn.

The Time Factor

It took Jones four years to win his first major title, the vacant IBF middleweight belt, when he decisioned Bernard Hopkins in May 1993. It took Mayweather just two, when he pummeled the courageous but outgunned Genaro Hernandez for the WBC junior lightweight strap in October 1998. How quickly they garnered a title belt actually may say more about the times each star was rising than about their progression.



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Mayweather has also had a contentious relationship with his father. Still, both seem to realize that some things are more important than boxing, and have been on good terms of late.

The last 10 to 12 years of boxing could be called the Microwave Age, with prospects being ranked with less than 20 fights. The talent pool is much thinner throughout boxing than it was 15 years ago, when Jones was working his way up.

Jones also rose during a time when American heavyweights such Mike Tyson, Riddick Bowe, and Evander Holyfield, not to mention a dominant heavyweight champion in Lennox Lewis, still ruled boxing and commanded big pay-per-view dollars.

Jones was considered a peripheral attraction, though there wasn't anyone Jones shied away from in the first 10 years of his career—beating Hopkins, defending the IBF belt against Thomas Tate, and then gaining superstar status by beating the then-undefeated James Toney to capture the IBF 168-pound belt.

Today, there is no galvanizing American heavyweight that generates mainstream attention. No one is there to really overshadow a talent like Mayweather, as Tyson, Holyfield, Lewis, and Bowe did Jones. So many of today's fans have turned to the smaller weight classes ruled by Manny Pacquiao and Mayweather. Where Jones was vying for the crumbs of attention left over by the big guys, Mayweather has had no such problem.

"There are similarities and differences between Roy and Mayweather," HBO analyst Larry Merchant said. "People forget, Roy in his prime was sensational, and when you watched him, particularly

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

After many years of estrangement, Roy Jr. and his father recently reunited. That was a positive move for their relationship, but probably won't help Jones between the ropes.

as a middleweight, you thought you had never seen anyone quite like this.

"But that was a different time. Roy had high ratings on HBO, but was never really a big pay-per-view fighter. His fight with Toney drew somewhere around 400,000, which was good at that time. These times are different. Mayweather can generate over a million pay-per-view buys, but Mayweather is fighting in a different climate today than when Roy was coming up. Roy wasn't a pay-pre-view star at that time; American heavyweights were. Today's world is a little different. Mayweather has been able to exploit the current market."

The Father Factor

Both Jones and Mayweather had demanding fathers who introduced them to boxing. But there is a huge difference: Floyd Mayweather Sr. and Uncle Roger were the heads of one of boxing's most talented families. Roger was a two-time titlist, winning the WBA 130-pound title and WBC junior welterweight strap. Roger fought Hall of Famers Julio Cesar Chavez and Pernell Whitaker, and future Hall of Famer Kostya Tszyu. He beat tough competitors such as Samuel Serrano, Harold Brazier, Livingston Bramble, and Vinny Paz.

Though "Big Floyd" never won a title, he fought all-time great Sugar Ray Leonard, getting knocked down twice in the eighth round before being stopped in the 10th. Boxing was ingrained in "Little Floyd" since he was a baby. There are Mayweather family photos of Little Floyd in boxing gloves, his father teaching him the nuances of the sport about the same time he was learning to walk.

Jones had a slightly different situation. "Big Roy" was an aircraft electrician at the Pensacola Naval Air Station and fought on the small-club circuit, not major venues like the Mayweathers. "Little Roy" was taught more to be tough, once thrown on a bull's back by his father and learned to swim when his dad chucked him into the Gulf of Mexico.

Where young Floyd was taught how to box, Little Roy was taught to fight, and rely on his considerable athleticism and blazing speed to win. He never really matured from the amateur style he perfected, and when those reflexes began to slow, and the fast-twitch muscle memory could no longer react fast enough, we all saw what happened against Antonio Tarver and, more frightfully, against Glen Johnson.

We may never see Mayweather flattened like that, even if he continues boxing into his late-30s. Mayweather is a boxer who is a great athlete, while Jones was a great athlete who never really learned how to box. It caught up to Jones. If the inevitable decline in speed doesn't catch up with Mayweather, he can thank Big Floyd.

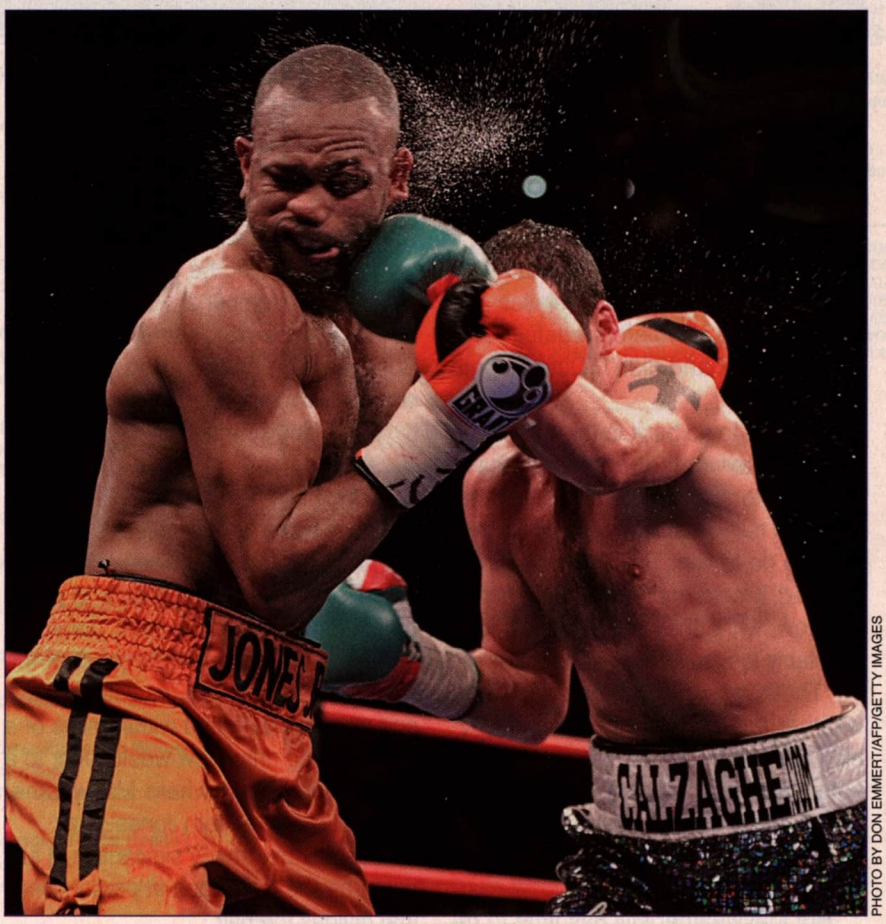
The Risk Factor

Both Jones and Mayweather went through a period of fighting dangerous opponents. Both, at similar times in their careers, were much more offensive-minded. Once they each got to the top, however, they changed. Mayweather, consequently, morphed into a defensive, counterpunching specialist. Jones, on the other hand, went from someone who had extraordinary athletic advantages over his opponents to a vulnerable fighter slowed by age.

Neither could be called high-risk takers. Mayweather's priorities are clear: Don't get hit and ration your punches as if they were diamonds. While it's been highly effective for him, it's an old-fashioned, virtually dead style.

"You'd see old reels of guys like Jack Johnson fighting that style, when fighters had to, because they were fighting 15, 20 times a year," Merchant said. "They had to be defensive to save themselves. Floyd executes it better than anyone has in a long time. But Floyd's reached the stage that if he has a future in boxing, it's certainly as a matchmaker. The fight with Juan Manuel Marquez was decided when they signed the contract."

When Mayweather had Marquez teetering, he didn't finish him, and when he was easily outpointing Carlos Baldomir, he did not ramp up the amps to close the show. He had Zab Judah lumped up and frustrated, but he did not try to stop him. That reluctance



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Jones' last bid for a world title ended in a loss to then-reigning light heavyweight champion Joe Calzaghe. When his reflexes began to slow, Jones could no longer compete with the very best, mainly because he never developed the techniques to be successful in his twilight years.

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Mayweather never really attempted to stop Marquez. Had he done so, it would have silenced the critics who skewered him for picking on an older, smaller opponent.

has embossed the "boring" label on Mayweather's career and raised an interesting and pertinent question: Why is he so cautious when it appears he's in total control?

Jones should be able to relate. He could have stopped David Telesco and didn't, should have stopped Julio Cesar Gonzalez and didn't. Ditto Reggie Johnson.

It all has to go back to taking risks.

Both Mayweather and Jones have shifted into cruise control, the mental gear that tells them to do as little as they have to do to win. Ten, 20 years down the road, it looks impressive on a record, but now, while they are still fighting, it inevitably leaves fans desiring more.

"That's why I say Jones and Mayweather are so similar," HBO blow-by-blow announcer Jim Lampley said. "They both mastered their craft, they both can do the things they're able to do, and not take any risks. They're that good. In their minds, why take any risks?"

But Mayweather still has time to reinvent himself, and if he fancies himself as this generation's Ray Leonard, he needs to end fights as Leonard did, with vicious aggression.

Mayweather could change course by beating Shane Mosley or the Miguel Cotto-Pacquiao winner. For Jones, it's too late. Providing he gets past Danny Green on December 2, Roy has a 2010 date with the 45-year old Hopkins. But even if he beats B-Hop, it may not change the memory of being blasted out by Tarver and Johnson.

The Personality Factor

Jones has a far less abrasive persona than Mayweather, who likes to play the provocateur, using the media to pump up fights and market himself. Jones, in his prime, let his talent do most of the talking, never had run-ins with the law, and wouldn't be found within miles of a roller-skating rink a few weeks prior to a major fight. This is where Mayweather could take a page from Jones' book.

Despite their many similarities, it just might be the difference in personalities that divides the pair.

"Both guys have big egos and both have huge talent, but I see a little kid in Floyd, and most of us who know him see that," Hall of Fame trainer Emanuel Steward said. "Roy was more mature at the same age. Roy was a country boy with his dogs. They had different roots. Roy's fine with that. Floyd likes a lot of attention and is always looking for praise, and is not as laidback as Roy. Floyd, I think, will change. There is a different side of him, a little boyishness to him that's appealing and I see that in him. I think Floyd can change, and I think he will change, I really do."

Jones never went out of his way to attract a crossover audience. Mayweather has shown the ability to do so, in part because of his popularity with the hip-hop, trash-talking generation. These days, regardless of whether we like it or not, flash and arrogance sells. The more than one million pay-per-view buys for the Marquez fight is certainly proof of Mayweather's marketability. But it will be up to the man who calls himself "Money" to decide what to do with the remainder of his prime.

Become all that you can be, Floyd. There's still time. ■

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SEMI-SUPER START TO "SUPER SIX"

By Brian Doogan

Arthur Abraham's destructive debut in "Super Six World Boxing Classic"—a 12th-round knockout of former world middleweight champion Jermain Taylor, which was stunning in its climactic brutality and a clear signal that the Little Rock, Arkansas native ought to

Abraham and Froch both emerged winners in the first two bouts of Showtime's "Super Six" super middleweight tournament. But Abraham's spectacular victory over shopworn Taylor (below) was far more eye-catching than Froch's untidy decision over Dirrell (left).

RAHAM-TAYLOR: PHOTO BY MICHAEL GOTTSCHALK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES
OCH-DIRRELL: PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY MICHAEL GOTTSCHALK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Abraham was eager to perform well for the international audience, and did just that by bludgeoning Taylor into a 12th-round kayo victim in front of a sell-out crowd of 14,000 fans in Berlin and Showtime's television cameras. Abraham's punching power seems just as potent at 168 pounds as it did at 160.

retire—certainly brought the winner a measure of what he is seeking. Prior to entering the tournament, Abraham was frustrated about the perception of him, particularly outside the German cocoon in which he has spent most of his career. He encapsulated his feelings in a ringside conversation on the night of Vitali Klitschko's display of dominance against Juan Carlos Gomez.

"I want to fight Kelly Pavlik [who dethroned Taylor for the world middleweight title] and I don't know why he says, 'No,' to this challenge," Abraham insisted. "I will fight anyone, any time, and any place, and it's up to Pavlik to say, 'Yes,' to make this happen."

After it had become clear that Pavlik had no desire to make the match, the 29-year-old resident of Berlin agreed to participate in the super middleweight round-robin tournament backed by Showtime. Unbeaten through 10 defenses as IBF middleweight titleholder, Abraham yearned for universal appreciation of his status as one of boxing's elite.

Stepping up eight pounds from 160 and into a possible series of matches against Jermain Taylor, Mikkel Kessler, Carl Froch, Andre Dirrell, and Andre Ward was not daunting to a man who once described the poverty of his formative years in Yerevan, Armenia, thus: "There wasn't even enough food to go round the population … My country was so poor that people died from being poor."

Such deprivation drove Abraham to the summit of the middleweight rankings, and the same hunger was evident when he got the Super Six off to a super start, certainly from the German fans' view, in front of a ferociously partisan crowd of 14,000 at the sold-out O2 World Arena in his adopted Berlin. The fight followed a familiar pattern in that Taylor started well and Abraham started slowly before he revved up his performance level and finished clinically and authoritatively against an opponent who was stopped with 14 seconds left in his previous bout, against Froch. Ominously, Taylor has been stopped in three of his past five fights and his hospitalization in Berlin should leave no one in doubt as to where his future ought to lie.

Approximately 1,000 miles away in his native Nottingham, Froch struggled to replicate the intensity and indefatigability he had demonstrated winning the WBC title against Taylor. Dirrell, the 26-year-

old from Flint, Michigan, who won an Olympic bronze medal at the 2004 Games in Athens, established his right to compete in this class despite falling to a split decision.

Nick Parkinson, writing for *Agence France-Presse*, compared the American's "breathtaking reflexes and fast punches on the counterattack" to Herol "Bomber" Graham, the Briton whose prodigious talent never quite reached fulfillment on the world stage. Dirrell frustrated Froch and emerged with credit.

"I thought Dirrell won the fight and I was surprised to see the scores," declared Glen Johnson, the "Road Warrior" who toiled in the super middleweight division for years before he won the world light heavyweight championship. "This is just something that happens in boxing until somebody bigger than boxing steps up and does something about it, like one of these politicians or somebody making a law, a commissioner like they have in the NFL or NBA." The decision in Froch's favor was far from larcenous, and the uncompromising Englishman was typically bullish about his night's work.

"It was not as dramatic or exciting as the fans have come to expect from me, but that wasn't my fault," he insisted. "People know now that I like nothing better than slugging it out toe-to-toe. Quite simply, I came to fight and Dirrell didn't. He ran and ran and ran. He isn't a massive puncher and I think he was scared of my power. I must admit that I didn't expect him to be so timid and it threw me a bit. I had to change my gameplan and adapt my style.

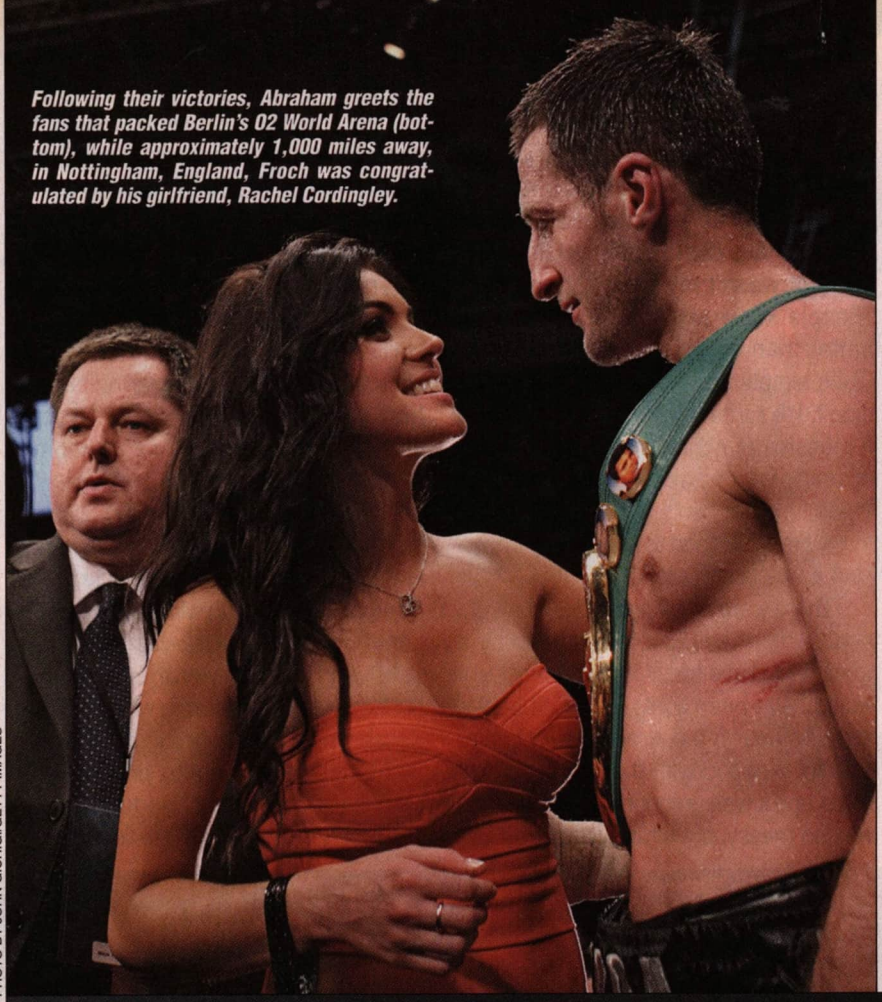
"There were a few times that I thought I had him when I just missed him by a whisker. Believe me, if I had connected it would have been lights out. But I beat a slick, defensive boxer at his own game, and I'm pleased with that. Styles make fights and it was unfortunate that this one was so messy, but what could I do? Dirrell came to spoil and hold and he tried to steal a decision. It almost worked, but almost is not good enough in this game. I was a little disappointed with my overall performance, but I retained my title and that's what counts."

True—and Froch also secured two points for his first win in the tournament, while Abraham gained three by winning via knockout. But the prevailing perception subsequently was that Froch's stock had dipped less than six months after he managed to discard the veil of anonymity, which obscured his talent for so long, with his marvelous effort against Taylor. Though the second favorite behind Denmark's Kessler to win the tournament before it began, the 32-year-old former British and Commonwealth champion will not have so many backers when he faces Kessler in Group Stage 2.

As this issue went to print, the 30-year-old Dane was scheduled to encounter 25-year-old American Andre

PHOTO BY MICHAEL GOTTSCHALK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Taylor's corner crew, along with the ringside medical team, administer to the stricken fighter immediately after the fight was stopped. The former world middleweight champion suffered a severe concussion and spent the night in the hospital. Taylor's boxing career may very well be over.



Following their victories, Abraham greets the fans that packed Berlin's O2 World Arena (bottom), while approximately 1,000 miles away, in Nottingham, England, Froch was congratulated by his girlfriend, Rachel Cordingley.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Ward, an Olympic Games gold medalist in 2004, in Ward's hometown of Oakland, California, on November 21, the final installment of Group Stage 1. Kessler's credentials stand supreme among his peers. He won the WBA belt in 2004 and made four successful defenses before he met his match in Joe Calzaghe. The retired former world super middleweight champion was made to dig deep into his reserves to produce the outstanding performance of his unbeaten career. Kessler's class on that night, and on many others, has convinced Calzaghe that his fellow Briton, Froch, will not overcome the bookmakers' bet to lift the inaugural "World Boxing Classic" trophy.

"Carl has done well with his career, he's got a lot of heart, he's a big hitter, and you've got to give him great credit for what he's done, but Kessler is the class act in this tournament," Calzaghe maintained. "Froch doesn't really defend himself well and this makes him very vulnerable, particularly against a guy who punches solidly and accurately, which I know all about from having fought him. My only concern for Kessler would be that

PHOTO BY MICHAEL GOTTSCHALK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

he has only fought once in more than a year, but if the inactivity hasn't affected him too badly, he is head and shoulders the best fighter in the tournament."

Interestingly, Froch and Kessler have struck up something of a friendship since entering this series. "Kessler and I got on as soon as we shook hands at a press conference in New York to announce these fights," Froch revealed. "He is a man of my own breed, a warrior whose principles are the same as mine. He fights from the heart, no small talk. He means business and is a strong, proud man. We have so much in common and we're both clued up financially—we have property interests—and we love fast motorbikes, so there is plenty for us to talk about. We've met up a few times and we have each other's phone number. We get on, but there is still that look in his eye and I can see it. I've told him, 'Respect before the fight, respect after the fight, but not during the fight,' and that's how it will be."

PHOTO BY HENNING BAGGER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Next up for Froch is tournament favorite Kessler, but first the Dane has to fight Andre Ward in the American's hometown of Oakland, California, which will complete the first stage of the Super Six.

It was approaching 3 AM local time inside the sold-out Trent FM Arena in Nottingham, holding approximately 8,000 people, when Froch and Dirrell reacted tentatively to the first bell. Froch was determined not to fall behind over the early rounds, as he had against Taylor, but he found Dirrell to be an elusive, tormenting target. Neither fighter managed to land much of note in the opening two rounds, but southpaw Dirrell, 167½, landed a good straight right in the third before Froch, 167¼, tried to pin him on the ropes and missed with a right cross. Dirrell, 18-1 (13), taunted Froch and landed a left before Froch moved in behind his right.

The American's confidence grew and he continued to box well in the fourth, making Froch miss and landing sharp punches to the head. Another right to Froch's head landed cleanly in the fifth, and the American was hurled to the floor as Froch's frustration grew. Dirrell smiled. He was performing just as he had hoped.

Froch imposed his raw strength on Dirrell for the first time in round six and a right clipped the American's jaw. Dirrell had to work outside his comfort zone for the first time, and the crowd, sensing a significant shift in momentum, rose to its feet and roared at the sound of the bell. But Dirrell would not be easily persuaded by Froch to yield. His speed continued to be an important factor over the next few rounds, befuddling Froch and convincing some observers that Dirrell could trouble Abraham by utilizing the same tactics.

Panamanian referee Hector Afu did not appreciate all of his tactics, however, and penalized Dirrell a point in the 10th round for excessive holding. Dirrell responded positively in the penultimate round, when he appeared to shake Froch with a series of lefts to the jaw. He continued to throw the more eye-catching shots in the final round, most notably a right to the jaw and another left hook.

Dirrell was perplexed when two judges, Massimo Barrovecchio and Daniel Van de Wiele, returned scores of 115-112 for Froch, while the third judge, Alejandro Rochin Mapula, scored 114-113 in his favor. THE RING made it 114-113 for Froch.

"I boxed well enough but didn't get the decision," said Dirrell. "I still don't know why the referee took the point off me in the 10th. He was rough the whole fight and the referee took the point away from me without a warning."

It was a much rougher experience in Berlin for Taylor whose immediate plans were unclear after Abraham, 31-0 (25), knocked him out cold with a right hand, referee Jose Guadalupe Garcia waving it over with only six seconds remaining without completing a count. Taylor, 166¼, boxed well at various stages, but only when Abraham, 168, allowed him. Abraham defended himself well throughout most of the bout and his unique defense and undoubted power must make him the dark horse for the tournament. Taylor's place looked set to be taken by fellow American Allan Green, though no immediate decision was taken by tournament organizers, or by Taylor, 28-4-1 (17), and his promoter, Lou DiBella, following Taylor's overnight stay in the hospital.

"I know that Kessler is the favorite to win this tournament and I have great respect for him because I recognize his ability," Abraham declared. "But people should not write me off so easily. I am comfortable and strong at super middleweight and I have carried my power. I have entered this tournament to win it and perhaps then I will be accepted as one of the best fighters in the world."

Roll on Group Stage 2. ■

Brian Doogan is THE RING's European correspondent.

Oscar De La Hoya

"Never In My Wildest Dreams Did I Think I Would Be One Of Those Fighters Who Turned Old Overnight"

During the five days THE RING spent with Oscar De La Hoya in late-June, we quickly discovered that retirement from the ring does not mean a laidback lifestyle, hanging out with his wife and children at home in Puerto Rico. If anything, De La Hoya is busier now than ever.

In less than a week, he held two press conferences, attended two fight cards in two different states, went to a weigh-in, was the guest of honor at a prefight dinner, visited an inner-city gym, and was a presenter at the ***Tecate Premios Deportes*** *awards telecast. And that was just the boxing stuff.*

De La Hoya also allowed THE RING to tag along when he visited the White Memorial Medical Center in Los Angeles, where his foundation has sponsored the Cecilia Gonzalez De La Hoya Cancer Center, the Oscar De La Hoya Labor And Delivery Center, and the Oscar De La Hoya Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

We also visited the construction site where the new Oscar De La Hoya Animo Charter High School is being built. Ironically, the new state-of-the-art school is at the same location that used to house the first gym De La Hoya attended as a kid.

In between the whirlwind of professional and charitable obligations, Oscar also found time for a round of golf at the Brookside Golf Club in Pasadena, where Eric Gomez, a boyhood pal and current vice president/matchmaking for Golden Boy Promotions, joined him.

Following a mid-day weigh-in at the Staples Center on Friday, June 26, we boarded Oscar's Citation X, the fastest civilian aircraft in the world, and headed for Tucson, Arizona, where Golden Boy was promoting an ESPN2 ***Friday Night Fights*** *card at the Desert Diamond Casino. Joining us for the ride were Oscar's son, Jacob, Golden Boy Executive Vice President Raul Jaimes, and manager Shelly Finkel, who had a fighter on the card.*

During the flight, THE RING Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins conducted a lengthy interview with De La Hoya. They touched on a wide range of topics, including life after boxing, the highs and lows of his career, and some of the mistakes he wished he could have avoided.

Collins reports: "Away from the spotlight, Oscar is relaxed and completely lacking pretension. He enjoys a good laugh, but seems very serious in a quiet, understated way. The thing that impressed me the most was the unfailingly polite and respectful manner with which he treated people. During the time we spent together, he never turned down a request for an autograph or a photo, posing and signing for literally hundreds of fans. Few superstars are so giving, but judging by the smile on his face, he loves doing it."

The Ring: Has it finally hit you that it's all over, that you're never going to fight again?

Oscar De La Hoya: It actually has sunk in. In the beginning when I first announced it, it was hard for me to believe. Actually, I didn't want to believe that it was over. But now that I've been to several events that we've promoted and been around fighters who are going to fight or are training for a fight, I realize, wow, I'm not the fighter anymore. I'm not the one getting all the attention. I'm a promoter. I'm a businessman. So now I've come to the conclusion that it's over. I've let it go already. I said to myself, *it's over. Let it go.*

The Ring: Is there an element of relief involved?

DLH: There is to a certain extent because when you're a fighter you love the adrenaline. You love the pressure that's involved with being an athlete. But at the same time, you don't want to be in that type of situation. So now that I'm no longer in that situation, sometimes I wish I was there, but most of the time I wish I wasn't. Boxing to me has always been a love-hate relationship. To me it's like being married to the best wife in the world, but at the same time it's tough. It's like everything. You have to work at it. Boxing was a very tough job, but I loved it.

The Ring: Do you think being around boxing so much has helped or hin-

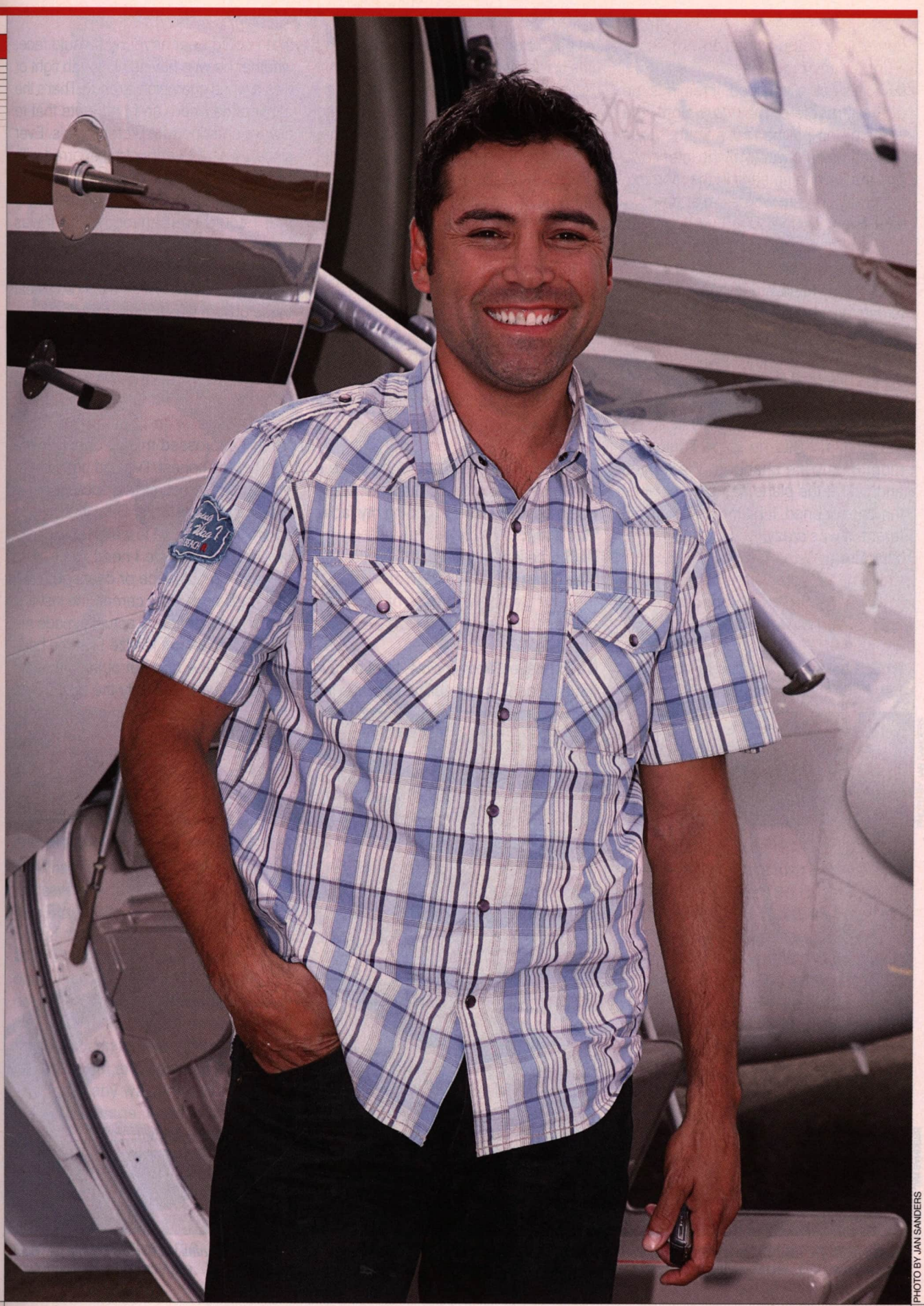


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

dered you getting used to not being a fighter any more?

DLH: It's actually helped. It reminds me of the struggle of making weight, the tugging and pulling that a fighter goes through on fight week, all the interviews and the waking up early in the morning. I'm pretty content where I'm at now.

The Ring: Even though you've been fighting for a long time, did it seem to go by quickly?

DLH: It still feels like it happened yesterday. Winning the Olympic gold medal. I can picture my life changing literally overnight. When I got back from Barcelona, I landed in LA-X and there were thousands and thousands of people waiting there for me. Nobody informed me of this; I had no idea. That's the moment my life changed. We landed and got off the plane, right there, when the door opened, it hit me—life was different. It was crazy.

The Ring: When did you realize that the fact that you were a good-looking guy was going to be almost as important to your career as your fighting ability?

DLH: I believe it was after my first fight, I started receiving fan mail. I started to get people driving past my house, young girls screaming my name. That's when I realized, wow, is this the way it's supposed to be? Is this your typical boxing fans, all these women? Then it hit me. This is a whole new, different audience. That's when it clicked. This is something different, so why don't we try to capture that feminine audience and have the women supporting you.

The Ring: Let's be honest. With all due respect, if you had exactly the same record you have but looked like Iran Barkley, things would probably have been very different.

DLH: We wouldn't be sitting here. It would have been a whole different story.

The Ring: Do you remember your first product endorsement?

DLH: Edge shaving gel. Rico Suave. I remember filming the commercial. There was a beautiful model rubbing my face.

The Ring: How old were you?

DLH: I believe I was 20.

The Ring: When you were young, the first five or six years of your pro career, did you think you were invincible?

DLH: I never felt invincible, but I always felt confident in my ability. I always felt that I could beat anybody I would face, whether he was having his fourth fight or was a world champion already. That's the confidence I had, and I attribute that to always sparring with professionals. Ever since I was 13 years old, I sparred with world champions. I would spar eight or 10 rounds. I always had the confidence that I could beat anybody. But it was never an attitude where nobody could beat me and I was king of the world. I just knew, deep down inside, I could beat these guys. I was sure of myself.

The Ring: You spoke quite a bit in the book you wrote with Steve Springer (*American Son: My Story*) about some inner turmoil. Was it difficult to share that with the whole world?

DLH: I expressed myself openly in the book. I was honest. I've had problems in my life. I've sometimes let success get to me and take over me. But I was able to control it. I was able to wake up and realize that, hey, maybe I need some extra help, some guidance or counseling. So at the tail end of my career, the last few years I was on top, it actually made me refocus, made me realize I can be beat, not only in the ring but outside the ring as well. It was probably the best thing I

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Flying high: The Ring Editor-in-Chief Nigel Collins interviews De La Hoya en route from Los Angeles to Tucson, Arizona, in Oscar's private jet. That's De La Hoya's son, Jacob, opposite his father.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Babe magnet: Even in retirement, De La Hoya still draws many female fans wherever he appears in public.

could have done, because it woke me up and saved my life.

The Ring: Did that come with maturity or circumstances?

DLH: I think it was circumstances that made me pull the trigger. I've always been the type of person who realized that if I need help, I'm going to get help. I've been open to help, open to hearing somebody out and seeing if they could help me in any way. I finally realized I needed a change. I had to change my lifestyle. I had to change things in order to become a better person and get to be where I wanted to get. I always realized that boxing wasn't everything to me. What I want to accomplish after boxing is what really drives me. That's the maturity aspect of my life. There are a lot of things I want to do that are bigger than what I did inside the ring.

The Ring: Obviously, when you win a fight there is a tremendous rush. Is there anything that can substitute for the feeling you get when your arm is raised in victory after a fight?

DLH: I was playing in a charity golf tournament in Puerto Rico, and in order to win we had to have a playoff with another team. There were maybe a couple of thousand people watching, and they were following us around for a couple of holes. And I had the final putt. If I made it, we'd win. If I didn't, we'd lose. I was 15 feet from the hole when I putted. I saw the ball going in the hole in slow motion. I visualized it going in. Everything just slowed down. And what a rush! The only time I've ever felt that rush before was in a fight, after I'd won. So I'm convinced, 1,000 percent, that if I play tournaments, if I play golf, it is going to substitute, make up for being retired. It was unbelievable. I was convinced that nothing was going to fill that void, but now it makes me feel sure of myself, that I won't come back. All I have to do is play golf and I can feel that rush.

The Ring: In the boxing ring, even though you have trainers helping, your fate is really in your own hands. If you're good enough, you are going to win the fight. As a businessman, there are a lot of other things in play that have to work in order to be successful. Before, if things went badly, you could always have another fight

and build the bank account back up again. Now you're relying entirely on business, and you no longer have the control you used to have inside a boxing ring.

DLH: I've been very fortunate to have surrounded myself with good people, people who really look out for me, people who are like family. And with Richard Schaefer, I can trust him with my wallet. That's how much I trust him. He's a smart individual, and I feel very confident that whatever fight we are in outside of the ring, we are going to win. Being a fighter is one-on-one and everything is in your hands. But, you know, sometimes it does make me a little nervous that I have to rely on other people. Like they say, if you want something done right, do it yourself. But with the team I have at Golden Boy, I have all the confidence in the world that they are going to take care of business.

The Ring: It took a while to get the right team together, correct?

DLH: I went through hell and back, and I'm glad I did because that's the way I've been able to learn and grow.

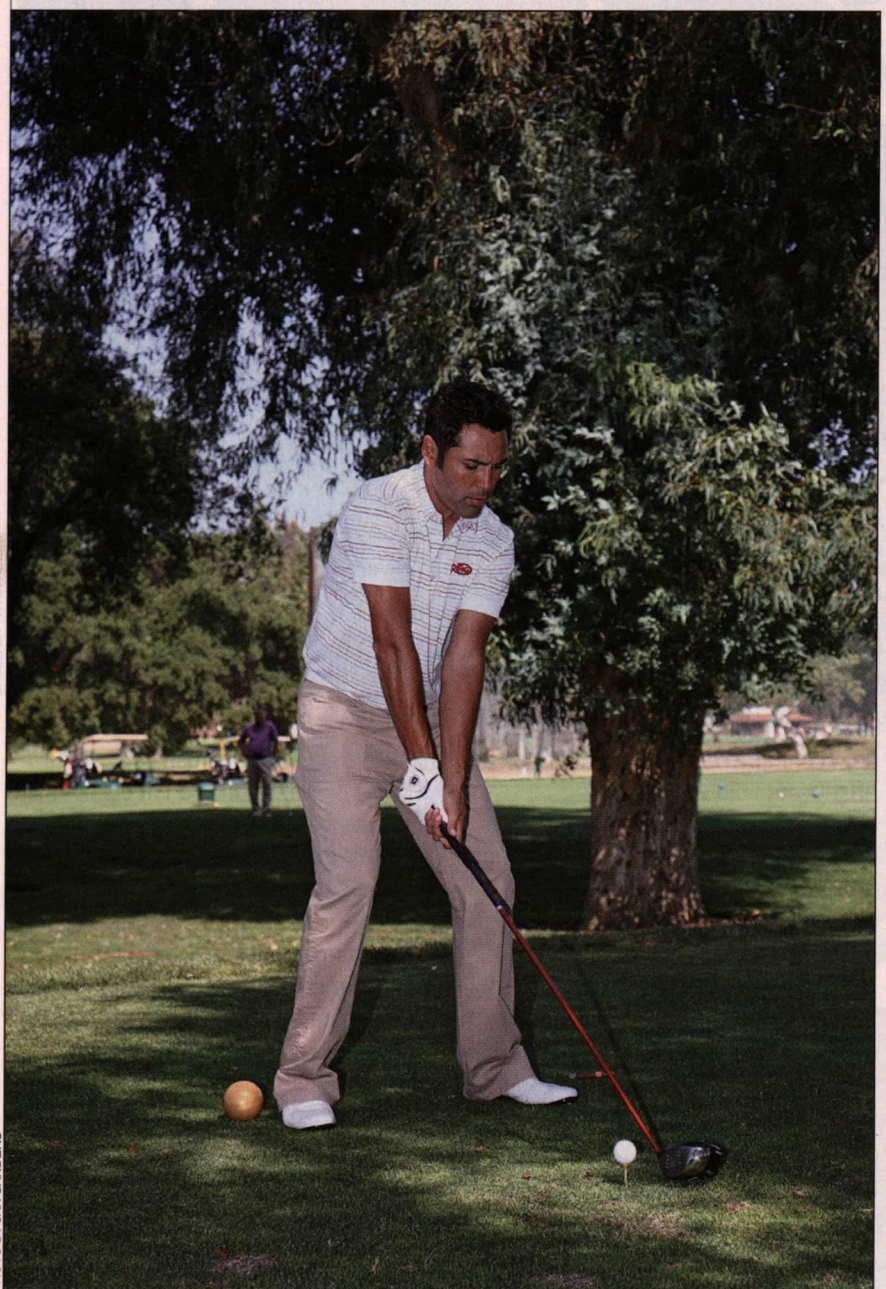


PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

De La Hoya is a passionate golfer and believes that the game will compensate for the rush that he used to get boxing. It's also a chance to step out of the limelight and enjoy himself with his buddies.

The Ring: Let's talk a little bit about Bob Arum. He was obviously a big part of your career, and on the surface Golden Boy Promotions and Top Rank have a mutually beneficial working relationship. But there still seems to be quite a bit of animosity, especially on Arum's side.

DLH: He obviously had a good run. I owe him a lot, and he owes me a lot. But obviously he missed out on a lot of big fights, a lot of opportunities, and I'm sure he would have liked for me to stay with Top Rank for all my fights until I retired. But that's just not the way it was meant to be. If you want to take your career to the next level, you have to cut that umbilical cord. I was able to form Golden Boy Promotions and take it to the next level. I'm sure he's still bitter about that and it still eats him inside. But that's the way the cookie crumbles.

The Ring: The country is going through some difficult economic times right now that have impacted all businesses, including boxing. Are you as optimistic about the future of the sport now as you were when you started Golden Boy Promotions?

DLH: Absolutely. As time goes by and as the apples that have fallen off the tree start to rot, that will make our opportunity that much brighter. We are going to be in this for the long run. We are going to promote for years to come. The Arums and the Don Kings of this world have had their run, and they had a wonderful run. We credit Arum and King for all the great fights they've promoted. Obviously there has been a negative side to that. They left a lot of dirt we have to clean up. But over time, I'm very optimistic that we can really help the sport grow. I still feel very confident that we can accomplish our goals.

The Ring: How does your role with Golden Boy Promotions work? Are you part of brainstorming sessions or are you presented with a selection of options to choose from? What is the genesis for most of the business ideas?

DLH: It's mainly Richard and I brainstorming. Sometimes I'll call him and ask what he thinks of an idea, will it work. He'll call me with all sorts of ideas.

We have a strong team and it's a team effort. It's a fun process because we all collaborate and talk about it. And there are a lot of times we don't agree with each other, but we talk about it and come up with the best solution.

The Ring: What part of promoting do you enjoy the most?

DLH: I think the best part is the thank yous I get from the fighters, the managers, and the people in the boxing industry. It tells you that you're doing a good job. It's satisfying to know that people appreciate it. We've impacted a lot of lives and we have a big responsibility, taking care of people. It feels gratifying to hear "thank you," especially from a fighter. History shows us that fighters have been scarred. They've been scarred because they've been treated wrong; they've been lied to. So when fighters come up and say thank you, it feels really good.

The Ring: Does it sometimes seem that there are more fighters who want to be promoted by Golden Boy than you can handle?

DLH: It's not becoming a problem, but it's difficult because we sometimes have to turn down fighters. We get resumes every single day from fighters who want to be with us, whether it's young fighters starting out or veteran fighters at the tail end of their careers. We want to create a standard with Golden Boy Promotions. First of all we want to make sure they can fight. We want to make sure they are good people outside the ring. We want to make sure they have good representation because it makes everybody's job easier. It's a learning process for everybody. We are a young company and still getting our feet wet.

The Ring: Golden Boy Promotions also brought three fighters into the company, Bernard Hopkins, Shane Mosley, and Marco Antonio Barrera. Hopkins and Mosley are still with the company. Whose idea was it to make fighters part of the business end of things?

DLH: When we talked about forming Golden Boy Promotions, we thought *why not bring the big names, the superstars of boxing.* It made sense for the business to bring them onboard. We felt it was a tremendous opportunity to jumpstart our company.

With Hopkins, that opportunity was unique. Here you have Hopkins who was always lied to, always in very bad situations with promoters. If we can turn this guy around, if we can prove to the boxing industry that it's not Bernard Hopkins' fault, it's the fault of everybody who handled him. And it worked.

The Ring: A lot of people thought the relationship with Hopkins wouldn't last very long.

DLH: Everybody would tell us: "Wait a week, wait a month; it's never going to last." And here we are five, six years later. Hopkins is very vocal, but fighters listen to him. Everybody listens to him. It was a perfect fit because here you have Hopkins, the one everybody had always taken advantage of, and here was Mosley, the nice guy with all the talent in the world.

The Ring: I know that fighters often fight hurt. Which fight did you go into the most hurt?

DLH: Probably the first Mosley fight. At that point, I was already struggling to make 147. I remember being extremely happy about making weight on Friday, so I said to my team, "Hey, guys, let's go celebrate the weigh-in." We went to East LA, closed down the restaurant, and had mariachi music. So I decided to order some oysters, and it so happened that I ate a bad oyster. That night my stomach was so bad that when I weighed in again the day of the fight, I

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

"Being of Hispanic decent we were always in a very difficult position. Are we proud to be Americans and raise the American flag, or should we just raise the Mexican flag? What do we do? We are caught in the middle. That's why a lot of people were against me, because they saw that I wasn't favoring the Mexican side 100 percent. I was proud of being American."

had actually lost two pounds. My stomach was so sore from throwing up, and I had diarrhea. My stomach was so sore it literally hurt if I touched it. I was hoping, please, don't hit me in the body. And it was a good fight. I was proud because I knew the situation. Mosley was a fighter I knew growing up and I knew it would be a tough fight. But it was a challenge I had to take.

The Ring: Let's turn it around. In what fight did you feel that everything was perfect going in, just the way you wanted it to be?

DLH: The first Julio Cesar Chavez fight. The training camp was perfect, and it was the second time I'd used the "Professor," Jesus Rivero, to train me. We had a perfect game plan. I was boxing beautifully, on my toes, going in and out. The bell rang, and even to this day it's hard for me to remember because I was so in the zone. I felt like I was floating in that ring. Everything was smooth; everything was instinct. That was the very first time, probably the only time, when everything fell into place perfectly, from the training camp all the way to the last round. It was kind of like an out-of-body experience. At the same time, I was going up against my idol. So it was a very strange moment all the way around, the way the fans responded to me—for the very first time they were against me. They were for Chavez. It just felt different.

The Ring: It seems that when a Mexican-American fights a Mexican national, even the Mexican-Americans

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

De La Hoya and Golden Boy Promotions CEO Richard Schaefer (the man Oscar says he trusts with his wallet) at the Marcos Maidana-Victor Ortiz fight at the Staples Center in Los Angeles. Their smiles quickly vanished when Ortiz suffered a TKO defeat.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

TV personality Mario Lopez joins De La Hoya and Shane Mosley at the fights. Mosley, who twice defeated Oscar, is now part of Golden Boy Promotions, both as a fighter and business partner. De La Hoya believes that bringing Mosley and Bernard Hopkins into the fold was a "tremendous opportunity to jumpstart our company."

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

De La Hoya on the attack against Mosley in their first fight, June 17, 2000. De La Hoya said he was more worried about this fight than any other because he'd known Sugar Shane since they were kids, and knew he was in with a very fast, very skillful opponent.

root for the Mexican national. Can you explain this strange dynamic?

DLH: I say American-Mexican. I was born in the United States, and I've always been very proud of it. My heritage is my heritage, but being of Hispanic decent we were always in a very difficult position. Are we proud to be Americans and raise the American flag, or should we just raise the Mexican flag? What do we do? We are caught in the middle. Being in a Mexican household with Mexican parents, we grew up with Mexican traditions, but being in that position we always felt a responsibility to act more Mexican. We have to speak English, but we have to favor the Mexican traditions. We grew up like that, and it felt so awkward. That's why a lot of people were against me, because they saw that I wasn't favoring the Mexican side 100 percent. I was proud of being American. This country gave me an opportunity to win an Olympic gold medal, and I'm very grateful for it. I live a very happy life. My parents came here so we could have a better life, and I've always been very appreciative of that. That is never going to change, and it is another topic that I have to tackle. It's a challenge to me to teach young Hispanics that we are Americans; let's be proud.

The Ring: Let's talk about some more of your fights. What was a fight that you thought would be difficult going in, but turned out to be easy?

DLH: Rafael Ruelas. I was convinced it was going to be a long, tough fight. I thought it was going 12 rounds. I'd sparred with both Ruelas brothers. I knew both since I was a kid. They were tough, durable, in your face, and I knew Rafael hit like a mule. So when I caught him with that uppercut/left hook, up against the ropes (in the second round), I was surprised, really surprised. Believe me I was extremely happy I was able to stop him in two rounds.

The Ring: The Ruelas knockout really showed your finishing instinct. Some fighters, when they hurt their opponent early in a fight are hesitant to go for the finish because they are worried about running out of gas. You, on the other hand, always went for it if the opportunity arose.

DLH: If the chance was there, I always went for it, because in boxing you never know. He might come back. You might get cut or knocked out yourself. My instinct was always to go for the finish.

The Ring: Let's turn it around: What fight did you think, going in, would be easy but turned out to be tougher than expected?

DLH: Probably the John-John Molina fight. He was a tough, rugged, experienced fighter. He knew the opportunity he had with a young, inexperienced fighter in front of him that he could try to expose. He knew all the tricks in the book, and when I dropped him early, I thought it was going to be an easy fight. But it ended up being one of my toughest. He was still a force to be reckoned with.

The Ring: Wasn't that the fight when Molina wore a wig?

DLH: It was funny because, when I was fighting him, every few rounds, I would have hair all over me. I wondered what was going on—It was coming from John-John's hairpiece *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Of all the fights you've had, which opponent were you the most worried about?

DLH: Sugar Shane Mosley the first time, because I knew who he was, I knew of his skills, I knew how fast he was. At the same time, it was in me to fight the best, but deep down inside, I knew how tough Sugar Shane Mosley would be.

The Ring: In a recent issue of THE RING, we interviewed some of your old opponents. Troy Dorsey said that you hurt your hand in that fight. Was that the beginning of your hand problems?

DLH: I remember fighting Troy Dorsey and hitting him on top of the head. This guy had a very hard head, and was almost impossible to knock out. That was the very first time my hand hurt. I remember after the fight, going back to the locker room and seeing that my hand was all swollen. That was the beginning of the end, let's say *(chuckles)*.

The Ring: Have you ever had surgery on your hands?

DLH: No.

The Ring: Who were your favorite fighters when you were a kid?

DLH: Roberto Duran …

The Ring: ***(interrupting)*** **He's gotten so big, hasn't he?**

DLH: Oh my gosh! It's amazing. Now I feel guilty about having that In-N-Out Burger *(laughs)*.

The Ring: Other favorites?

DLH: Sugar Ray Leonard, obviously Julio Cesar Chavez. Those three fighters were the ones who had the most impact on my boxing career. They give you some sort of inspiration, whether it was wanting to emulate Sugar Ray Leonard himself, the way he acted outside the ring, the way he carried himself. Whether it was Duran, and wanting to be a killer inside the ring, or Chavez, who destroyed his opponents with an accumulation of punches. The combination of those three fighters was an inspiration all the way around.

The Ring: It seems like Chavez might have finally forgiven you for beating him twice.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Robert Duran was one of De La Hoya's boyhood heroes, and in June 2009, Oscar had the opportunity to present "Manos de Piedra" with a trophy at the Tecate Premios Deportes awards.

DLH: I don't know if he has forgiven me, but Chavez is a real man and realizes, hey, he had a good run—you win some, you lose some. Every time he sees me, he hugs me and we rap a little, so it's all good.

The Ring: Let's make a list of what you consider your five greatest moments in boxing.

DLH: My all-time best moment in boxing was winning my Olympic gold medal. That, by far, tops anything I've ever accomplished inside the ring. It was the ultimate.

The Ring: What else?

DLH: Winning my first title, at home in Los Angeles, against Jimmi Bredahl, was a very satisfying win. It was satisfying because of the way I won it. They made me weigh in the same day as the fight. The way I was able to handle him, take him apart, and finish him off in the later rounds—I was pretty proud of myself. I had just won a world title, and I thought I was going to be satisfied with that. So that moment was very satisfying.

The Ring: You also did it in a very famous LA venue, the Olympic Auditorium.

DLH: Right. My father used to take me there when I was five or six years old. I would meet up with my little boxing friends from the gym. We used to go buy some popcorn. Those were fun times. I remember one time watching Don King and "Macho" Camacho walking around ringside. People were booing them and throwing popcorn at them. It stuck in my mind because I didn't know who Don King and Camacho were. I asked my father, "Why are they booing them and throwing things?" He pointed to Don King and said, "That's the bad guy."

The Ring: Did King ever try to sign you?

DLH: Oh, yes. Once I got back from Barcelona, the whole world was calling my house. I have no idea how they got the number.

The Ring: Okay, we've got two great moments. What are the other three?

DLH: One of them was beating Ike Quartey. We had postponed that fight because I got cut in training, and I would have been in better shape if we had fought when it was originally scheduled.

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

"My all-time best moment in boxing was winning my Olympic gold medal. That, by far, tops anything I've ever accomplished inside the ring. It was the ultimate."

I had trained very hard for the first date, but when it was rescheduled, I have to admit that I slacked off a bit. I was so confident I could beat him, because I really didn't know who he was. He was some undefeated African fighter, so I knew he'd be tough, but how tough could he be? Well, I found out. He was a very tough cookie. The fight really showed me a lot about myself, who I really was, how I could dig deep and fight really hard.

The Ring: It all came down to the last round.

DLH: Absolutely. I was thinking: *This is fun!* I'd never been in that kind of situation, where it was give-and-take, and it was a fun experience.

The Ring: Did you realize coming out for the final round that you really had to take it to him?

DLH: Absolutely. I had to maintain the pace, and when I pinned him on the ropes and landed all those unanswered

punches, he was out but wouldn't go down. He kept throwing punches instinctively. It was one of my proudest moments.

The Ring: We've got two to go.

DLH: I would have to say the first Julio Cesar Chavez fight, just the way I handled the whole situation, the fact that I was up against a Mexican hero. Even my family was asking, "Why are you fighting him? He's our hero." Until this day, my little sister asks me why did I beat her hero. It was a tough, tough situation to deal with outside of the ring. It was tough emotionally. We grew up with Chavez, we idolized him, we always watched his fights. It was one of those fights where I felt proud of beating him, but at the same time it hurt. But the fact that for the very first time I felt resentment from the people, for the first time I was hearing the boos, the way I handled it showed what my character is all about.

The Ring: Was there a lot of negative feedback after beating Chavez?

DLH: After I beat him, I was in the East LA Parade. It's a huge parade; probably about a million people watch it. I'm on the float, and I feel proud and happy. But right from the start, I'm hearing all these boos. I'm looking at all these people yelling. Obscenities were flying all over the place, and it was all because I beat Chavez. I remember my father was yelling back and telling these people to go screw themselves. I told him to relax and take it easy, but he was angry. People were yelling, "You're not Mexican," and I was thinking *what are you talking about?* It's funny now, but that was the very first time I saw first-hand that so many people were angry.

The Ring: You have one more to go.

DLH: I would have to have to say the Fernando Vargas fight. Considering what he had taken ***(Editor's note: Vargas tested positive for performance enhancing drugs)***, considering what good shape he was in, the fact that the rivalry was so intense, it made it a personal fight. It was one of the moments where I really disliked my opponent, and I've never felt that kind of anger for anyone. I really wanted to beat him. Knocking him out in the 11th round was very gratifying.

The Ring: When you were training for the Manny Pacquiao fight, at what point did you realize there were going to be problems?

DLH: My first sparring day. When I was receiving punishment from my sparring partners, I thought *wow, this has never happened to me before.* In my whole boxing career, I'd always prided myself on being in control of my sparring, making sure I'd get the best of it, making sure I didn't get hit. For the very first time, I was getting beaten up. I didn't tell anybody. I didn't tell my trainer Nacho Beristain. Everybody in the gym was always very positive, saying, "It's okay. You'll get used to it. You'll adjust." But after every training session, I was very concerned. I was worried.

The Ring: Did you ever consider calling off the fight?

DLH: No. The show must go on, because you always want to feel like everything is going to be okay.

The Ring: Were you fooling yourself?

Due to their bitter outside-of-the-ring relationship, De La Hoya counts his 11th-round kayo of Fernando Vargas as one of the most satisfying victories of his professional career.

PHOTO BY WILL HART/HBO

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Golden slumber: As a long and exhausting day draws to a close, Oscar takes a well-deserved nap.

DLH: Absolutely. I was hiding it, which was a huge mistake. I was beaten even before the bell rang.

The Ring: Was it just the weight or age and the tough fights catching up with you?

DLH: Well, every fighter is different. With my lifestyle when I was younger, at the early stages of my career—I have to admit that I lost a few years because of my lifestyle, with the drinking, staying out late, and the women. It shortened my career by a few years, and at 36 years old it caught up to me. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be one of those fighters who turned old overnight.

The Ring: There was a lot of speculation about the fact that you gained very little weight between the weigh-in the day before and the fight. Did that impact you?

DLH: Look, I made a huge mistake. In my mind, I still wanted to create history, do something different. I was able to fight at 130, 135, 140, 147, 154, and 160. What I really wanted to do was come back down and fight at 154, 147, and try 140. I wasn't even thinking about 135. In training camp my idea was to get my weight way down so I'd be ready for my next fight after Pacquiao. I think I got ahead of myself, and it destroyed me. Two months before the fight I was weighing 142. I felt weak. I had no energy. Again, I was fooling myself, telling myself it was going to be okay. I was full of myself, but the weight just killed me.

The Ring: It seemed like you wanted it to go on forever, but your body did not.

DLH: Nigel, I love boxing. It's what I breathe. It's what I dream about. I love competing. But physically it is now impossible. It's one of those pains that never goes away.

The Ring: Do you ever dream that you are still fighting?

DLH: There are times that I do dream about being in the ring, on the big stage, listening to the cheers of the crowd. Boxing will be with me forever. It's a passion I have. I really love boxing.

The Ring: Were you angry about the way the Floyd Mayweather fight turned out? You were even or maybe ahead at the halfway point, jabbing well, getting him on the ropes. You were so close, but you couldn't keep it up the entire 12 rounds.

DLH: That was the fight that showed me it was the beginning of the end. It showed me that physically my body was breaking down. In boxing, you should tough it out, but there comes a time when something is going to lock up on you. It shows you that there is no tomorrow, and there's nothing you can do about it. It was very frustrating that I couldn't throw the jab or throw combinations because of the pain, because it was actually an easier fight than I thought it would be.

The Ring: You came so close to beating Mayweather anyway, would you have taken the rematch if he had wanted it?

DLH: I think so. It would have motivated me to get some therapy on my shoulder, maybe do something to strengthen it for the next time. Obviously, it was going to be a difficult fight, but if I was better physically, it would have been a different story.

The Ring: Now that you won't be fighting anymore, have you thought about running for political office?

DLH: I've never thought about it, but I'll never count it out. Who knows? Maybe, 10, 15, 20 years from now. In the political field, you'll never ever satisfy everybody. But through my foundation, I've been able to impact a lot of people, and I've been very satisfied.

The Ring: Was there anybody during your career that you wanted to fight, but never got the opportunity?

DLH: *(long pause)* Maybe not. I was satisfied. Whoever they put in front of me I fought. I kind of fought everybody. There were always tons of fighters calling me out, but I'm pretty satisfied with who I fought.

The Ring: Is there any one thing you want to do that you haven't done yet?

DLH: I would like to play golf at the hallowed ground of St. Andrews—and get a hole in one. That would be like winning another gold medal. ■

QUALIFIED

Gamboa Shines, Juanma Exp

By Don Stradley

Seated in the packed WAMU Theater at Madison Square Garden, his face lit by the glow of multi-colored lights swirling above the action, promoter Bob Arum looked like a man trying to stay calm while taking a polygraph test. He turned his waxen face towards the arena's clock. Then he turned his attention back to the ring, where Juan Manual Lopez and Rogers Mtagwa were wading through the final seconds of what had been a brutal encounter.

Arum had been the proverbial lion in winter all evening, at one point announcing to press row that he had "the first Hispanic heavyweight champion" in Odlanier Solis, a

SUCCESS

osed, Mtagwa Steals The Show

270-pound lard ass who'd just kayoed knockout-victim-for-hire Monte Barrett. That Barrett has a history of knockout losses and had taken the fight on short notice meant little to Arum, for he revels in his stable of Hispanic fighters the way Howard Stern revels in strippers: They are the keys to his fortune. But during the final minutes of

While undefeated Cuban Yuriorkis Gamboa looked outstanding stopping Whyber Garcia in the fourth round (opposite page), Puerto Rican hotshot Juan Manuel Marquez was badly hurt late in his fight and was lucky to finish on his feet (below), as unheralded Rogers Mtagwa stole the show with an inspired, albeit losing, performance.

PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND

"Island Warriors: Latin Fury 12," the most recent of Top Rank's modestly budgeted Latin themed pay-per-view shows, Arum looked ready to bust.

Puerto Rico's Lopez, 121, Arum's latest ethnic hero, was being pushed to the limit by Mtagwa, 121, a journeyman who, like Barrett, was hired to be a willing accessory in building another Top Rank star. At best, Mtagwa was supposed to give Lopez four or five rounds of brisk action before capitulating. Instead, he was smashing Lopez in the face with right hands, and was on the verge of knocking Lopez out. For the 3,152 in attendance, watching Lopez totter around the ring during the 12th was like watching a drunk, blindfolded man coming perilously close to an open elevator shaft, only to lurch away at the last moment. Perhaps it was the sort of baptism under fire that all fighters need, but as far as Arum was concerned, Lopez could have done with much less fire. When it was over, the judges voted for Lopez, and the color returned to Arum's face.

Judges Steve Weisfeld, Carlos Ortiz, and Kevin Morgan turned in scorecards reading 115-111, 116-111, and 114-113, respectively, all for Lopez, who retained his WBO 122-pound title. THE RING had it even, 113-113, scoring the final round 10-8 for Mtagwa. (There could be some argument that the opening round could've been 10-8 for Lopez, since he appeared to score two flash knockdowns, only to see them ruled as slips by referee Eddie Cotton.)

Although the verdict was greeted by some jeers, and a few in the press row grumbled (perhaps because they were denied a chance to write about the upset of the year), the decision was not an outright travesty. Lopez had done well during the early rounds, scored a fluky knockdown in the fifth, and even during the rounds where Mtagwa pasted him, Lopez landed often enough to stay competitive. Nevertheless, while Lopez won the decision, he didn't win the fight. His lumpy face was proof of that.

"I thought Lopez fought a stupid fight," Arum told the press later. Still, Arum went into a full-tilt sales pitch, describing Lopez' golden future on the world's greatest network, "HBO," a remark that hung in the air like a dissonant note since the commentator duties for "Latin Fury 12" were handled by Showtime's Steve Farhood and Al Bernstein. If Arum seemed feisty, it's only because he's invested so much in Lopez.

Arum hopes to match Lopez, 27-0 (24), with Yuriorkis Gamboa, 17-0 (15), the sinewy Cuban featherweight who fought in the co-main event, stopping Whyber Garcia in four rounds. In fact, many of us want Lopez-Gamboa, for it's a rare and wonderful thing when two young, promising fighters of similar size emerge at the same time and appear destined to meet. That feeling was in the air three decades ago when Tommy Hearns and Ray Leonard were entering their prime

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Lopez got off to a good start, banging home plenty of clean shots, but Mtagwa has a great chin and withstood "Juanma's" early surge and rallied down the stretch, coming very close to scoring a huge upset.

years, and more recently when Oscar De La Hoya and Felix Trinidad were young bucks. These match-ups don't always live up to expectations: Hearns and Leonard gave us a rivalry for the ages; Trinidad and De La Hoya didn't. It's not that Gamboa and Lopez will ever be as famous or accomplished as the aforementioned foursome, but it's enticing to have a couple of young fighters like them sharpening their skills and maturing before our eyes.

The possibility of Gamboa-Lopez is no less appealing after the near disaster of "Latin Fury 12," though our impressions have changed a bit. It was originally thought that Gamboa was the raw, off-balance fighter, with Lopez being the sharpshooter who would probably outclass him. Now, with Gamboa looking lightning quick against Garcia, and Lopez looking well off his game against Mtagwa, we're beginning to wonder if it's Lopez rather than Gamboa who has a lot more to learn. For instance ....

Just Because You're Fighting, A Brawler Doesn't Mean You Have To Brawl

By the fifth round it was apparent to everyone in the arena, except for the fine folks in Lopez' corner, that Mtagwa was gradually turning the fight his way. But rather than using his jab and a little movement, Lopez continued to trade with the hardheaded Mtagwa. This resulted in Lopez being badly hurt in the 10th, nearly knocked through the ropes and saved by the bell ending the 11th, and wobbly for most of the 12th. We're not suggesting he should've turned totally defensive and run for an entire round, but had he mixed some boxing with his attack, he might have gone back to Caguas looking a little less like George Chuvalo.

Just Because You Have A Good Chin Doesn't Mean You Have To Take So Many Shots

Hit the average guy in the face 20 times with overhand rights, and he'll eventually put his hands up to block, especially when it's coming from someone like Mtagwa, who not only telegraphs his punches, but practically sends an e-mail to let you know another right hand is coming. Not Lopez, though.

The Tanzanian Rocky

Rogers Mtagwa, 25-13-2 (18), has had the sort of career that Glen Johnson has had: lots of close losses on the road, some bad breaks, and a general lack of acknowledgment from fans. Johnson, though, went on to win a championship and earn some good paydays. J Russell Peltz believes Mtagwa can do the same.

"Rogers is only 30," Peltz told THE RING. "He reminds me of Dick Tiger and some other African fighters, he's getting better as he gets older. Lopez said Gamboa should fight Mtagwa next, and we'd be all for that, anyone from 122 to 126."

According to Peltz, Mtagwa wasn't too upset by the judges' decision. "Rogers doesn't get too high or too low," Peltz said. But three days after "Latin Fury 12," Peltz was still brooding.

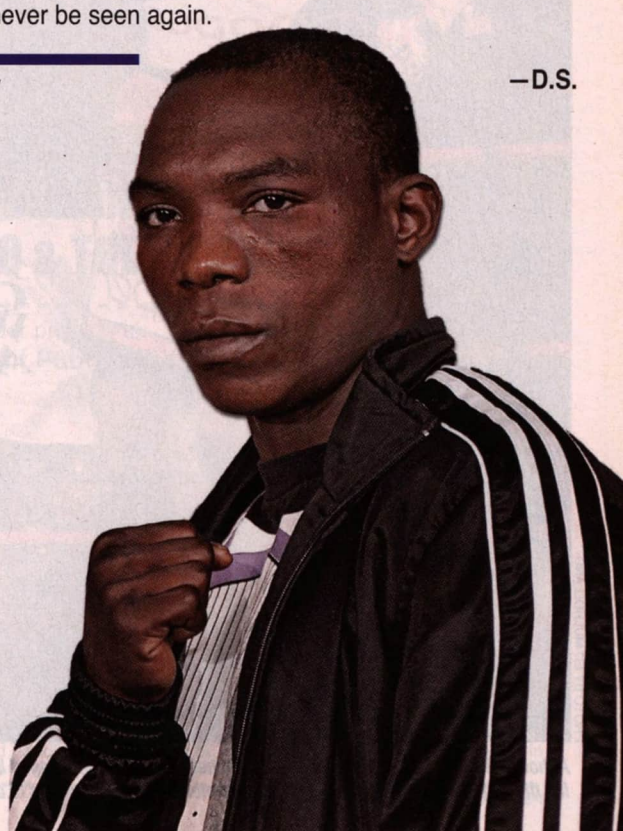
"The WBO should mandate an immediate rematch. There was so much wrong in that fight, a bogus knockdown in the fifth, bogus judging. What happened to the rule that a fighter who is supported by the ropes is considered knocked down? Lopez was saved by the ropes at least twice, maybe more. I have to look at the fight again, but I know Rogers won. I like Eddie Cotton, but he had a bad night. He would've stopped the fight if Rogers was staggering around like Lopez."

"I just don't get Bob Arum. He has made more money than he'll ever spend, so why can't he do the right thing? We could put the rematch in Roberto Clemente Stadium in Puerto Rico and sell it out. How can they just forget about this in a week or two?"

Peltz couldn't even take solace in knowing Mtagwa came out of this fight with his reputation enhanced, saying, "It wasn't on HBO, so how many people actually saw it?"

Those who tuned in may have seen Mtagwa's arrival as a force at junior featherweight. Either that, or "Latin Fury 12" will be remembered as the night a fighter with a dozen losses came within one punch of the big time, only to never be seen again.

—D.S.



Mtagwa would gladly fight Gamboa next

PHOTO © CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

There were clubfighters all over America that night who weren't getting hit as often as Lopez. On the plus side, we learned Lopez can take a punch, but could he take the same shots from Gamboa?

Just Because You Can Punch Doesn't Mean You'll Knock Everybody Out

Prior to the bout, Lopez had said of Mtagwa, "He's a little awkward, and I have been practicing stepping back a little bit." That sounded good, but once Mtagwa decided to drag Lopez into a street fight, "Juanma" forgot about anything he worked on in the gym and chose to exchange punches. Lopez, whose power never let him down before, grew arm weary trying to slow Mtagwa down.

Still, there's another way of looking at Lopez' ragged win, as Farhood told THE RING via e-mail, "It's easy to be overly critical of Lopez regarding his performance against Mtagwa, but instead of focusing on how much he got hit, I'm thinking about how much he landed without visible results. I believe Lopez to be a huge puncher, but Mtagwa has a great chin. Should Lopez face Gamboa, who's to say whether the Cuban will be able to withstand the type of punishment Lopez dished out at the Garden?"

Lopez will also be moving up from junior featherweight to featherweight, which might improve his stamina. He'll also be more aware of what Gamboa brings to a fight, which leads us to another lesson Lopez should learn …

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND

Although Mtagwa often telegraphed his punches, he repeatedly tagged Lopez with hard shots, especially during the last three rounds. Sadly, Lopez' promoter, Bob Arum, refuses to consider giving Mtagwa a rematch.

Just Because You're Being Groomed As The Next Big Thing Doesn't Mean You Can Take Opponents Lightly

Lopez' willingness to slug may have stemmed from the lack of respect he had for Mtagwa. There was a moment in the fight, after the bell ending a middle round, when Lopez sneered at Mtagwa with obvious disdain. It was the look a snotty debutant gives to an ugly girl who has crashed her party. Lopez' attitude was, *How dare you come at me with your crazy headbutts and your rough style. Don't you realize I'm the new Felix Trinidad?*

Mtagwa either didn't know or didn't care. After taking several hard punches in the first round, you could see a change come over him in the second, as he imposed himself on Lopez with a stubborn exuberance. True, the judges scored the first six rounds for Lopez, but Mtagwa had found a doorway into the bout. He began hurling himself at Lopez, slashing at him with rights, and refusing to be intimidated. When Lopez tried to overwhelm him with combinations, Mtagwa simply charged in like a criminal elbowing past security. Mtagwa's dumb magic culminated in the final three rounds, which belonged to him alone.

The fighters' respective corners told the story after the bout: Mtagwa's corner was jubilant. Mtagwa's trainer, Bobby "Boogaloo" Watts, smiled broadly and shadowboxed, saying "Wow," as if he'd just witnessed the impossible. Lopez, who'd gone 12 rounds for the first time, was slumped on his stool, exhausted, a white towel over his head, his handlers huddled around him as if they were medics tending to an accident victim. Lopez later admitted Mtagwa gave him the toughest bout of his career, but he kept repeating that Mtagwa was dangerous only because he had nothing to lose.

"I have everything to lose, he had nothing to lose," said Lopez. "That's why this fight was difficult. From now on, I only want to fight real champions, not these fighters with nothing to lose."

Arum did give Mtagwa credit for his efforts, saying, "He stayed in there and didn't get discouraged, and at the end had Juanma reeling, so you have to give him props."

Mtagwa will have to be satisfied with props, for when the subject of a rematch was brought up, Arum said only that the verdict was in, Lopez won, a January bout in Puerto Rico awaits, to be followed by a possible showdown with Gamboa next year. Mtagwa isn't in the picture.

What Arum stopped short of saying is that Mtagwa is out of the running because he's not Hispanic. If a Mexican or Puerto Rican had given Lopez such a hairy experience, there certainly would be a rematch. But Mtagwa, a Tanzanian who fights out of Philadelphia, has about as much chance at a rematch with Lopez as Joshua Clottey has at getting Miguel Cotto again: none. Arum didn't even seem particularly happy that he'd promoted one of the best fights of the year, which under most circumstances would be followed by a sequel.

"The only thing on Arum's mind was that Lopez wasn't the hit in New York that he thought he'd be," said Mtagwa's Hall of Fame promoter, J Russell Peltz.

"Thirty-five years ago, every promoter in boxing would be bidding on the rematch. Now, everyone goes running to HBO first to see if they want it. I just don't get it. We can petition for it, but when does anything in boxing go right? Everyone is on the side of the guy with the undefeated record. Rogers gets no respect because he had 12 losses. They couldn't even put Rogers' picture on the posters." Peltz concluded by telling THE RING, "I'll live with round 12 for the rest of my life, just waiting for Rogers to score the knockout and get the storybook finish he deserved."

Unfortunately, the story is being controlled by Arum. For Arum, the Hispanic market is still intoxicating, and he would tell us we're nuts for harping on a rematch for Mtagwa. He'd tell us we don't know how the business works. After all, he's the millionaire promoter, not us. But we do know that this is an era where good fights are scarce, and we wonder if anyone can really afford to ignore something as compelling as Lopez-Mtagwa II. ■

Don Stradley, a regular contributor to THE RING, was ringside at the WAMU Theater for Lopez-Mtagwa.

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Ranking The Best Fighters In The World

By William Dettloff

One of the first things you'll notice about this, our 14th consecutive go at ranking the 100 best fighters in the world, is that quite a few names you are used to seeing here are gone or positioned in such a spot that would have been unthinkable in the past. It's because time passes, people change, get old, get concussed, quit the business, get killed, find God, etc. You know, cycle of life stuff.

Floyd Mayweather is back, and we suppose that qualifies as good news. He's an unusual talent. But Joe Calzaghe is gone, at least for now, probably for good. Oscar De La Hoya too. Vernon Forrest is gone, regrettably for good, and Roy Jones, formerly the cream of the crop, hangs on by the skin of his oddly over-developed left biceps.

Kelly Pavlik, last year one of the game's rising stars and rated as such, is in free-fall. Ricky Hatton too. We won't even discuss Antonio Margarito.

Many were demoted or fell out altogether from inactivity, an applicant's worst enemy. A few got in only because they had an important fight scheduled right after press time, as though they knew their time was running out and wanted to get on this train. Who could blame them?

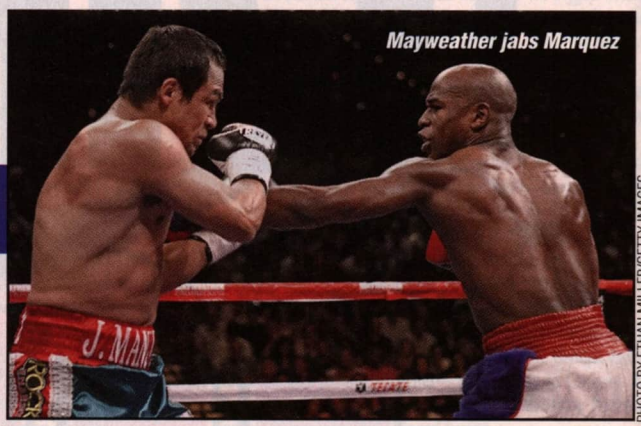
Others are resurgent, have progressed the way their best hopes intended, or simply moved into spots formerly occupied by those who have fallen or jumped off the treadmill. Sugar Shane Mosley reappeared among the best. Andre Berto shot up the rankings, as did Nonito Donaire and Chad Dawson and especially Celestino Caballero. The brothers Klitschko too have been ranked in such a way that their dominance over other men half their size is sufficiently reflected.

The usual suspects are all here, though, pretty much where you would expect them to be. Manny Pacquiao, Juan Manuel Marquez, Miguel Cotto and company are all, more or less, where they were last year. The willingness of these men to face one another is one of the qualities that marks them as among the best in the world at what they do.

It goes without saying that you're not going to agree with all that unfolds on the following pages. Some will seem questionable, some highly dubious, and some downright indefensible. That's fine. You'll get over it. Send us an email, write a letter, kick the dog, or whatever, get it out of your system and then keep reading. It's flawed like anything, but it's a good list. In fact, if there is a list ranking the best 100 lists that rank something, it would definitely crack the top 10. But that's just our opinion.

1. MANNY **PACQUIAO** World Junior Welterweight Champion 49-3-2 (37)

Last Year's Ranking: 1
Status Report: By the time you read this, Pacquiao will have either added to his already burgeoning legend by beating fellow pound-for-pound entrant Miguel Cotto, or he will have seen his four-year, 10-fight winning streak come to an end. Either way, his wins over the naturally bigger Oscar De La Hoya (KO 8) and Ricky Hatton (KO 2) demonstrated well enough the unique savagery and skills of the world's best prizefighter. If he has beaten Cotto, and he is the betting favorite to do so, his standing among the great fighters cannot be disputed.
Future: A win over Cotto means a superfight with Floyd Mayweather. A loss and maybe Juan Manuel Marquez gets that third match he's been crying for.


Mayweather jabs Marquez
PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

2. FLOYD **MAYWEATHER**
Welterweight 40-0 (25)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: If there was any suspicion that Mayweather would be rusty following his 21-month retirement, he eradicated it during his flawless win over Juan Manuel Marquez (W 12). It was all there—the speed, the defense, the reflexes, the confidence. "Money" never looked better, which is bad news for whatever higher-profile fighter he meets next, but probably good news for the rest of the world's better welterweights. They're not going to get him in the ring anyway.
Future: In a perfect world he faces the Pacquiao-Cotto winner, or at least the winner of Shane Mosley-Andre Berto. In the real world, pencil in Juan Diaz or Amir Khan.

3. SHANE **MOSLEY** WBA Welterweight Titleholder 46-5 (39) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 14
Status Report: Breathed new life into his career—and jumped up 11 spots in this ranking compared to last year—with a surprising and brutal beat down of former pound-for-pound entrant Antonio Margarito (KO 9). At 37 years old, Mosley looked as fast and powerful as ever and, in fact, probably looked too good for his own good. Repeated and public overtures to Mayweather and Pacquiao fell on deaf ears.
Future: As of this writing, he is close to finalizing a match with Andre Berto for January 30 in Las Vegas. The hope is that he will then meet the winner of Pacquiao-Mayweather or Mayweather-Cotto. But there's also a chance he might get Mayweather, as it would cut Top Rank fighters out of the equation.

4. BERNARD **HOPKINS** Light Heavyweight 49-5-1 (32) 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 4
Status Report: Hopkins hasn't done a thing between last year's analysis and this one, other than get a year older, which in his case might mean a year better. A fight with cruiserweight champion Tomasz Adamek fell through, and it's probably just as well for Adamek that it did. If Hopkins has as much left as he appeared to in losing to Joe Calzaghe close and then beating the tar out of Kelly Pavlik, Adamek would have been in trouble.
Future: Hopkins is slated to face journeyman Enrique Ornelas the day after this magazine goes on sale. Then, barring any catastrophes, he'll get the rematch with Roy Jones that was 16 years in the making, early in 2010.

5. JUAN MANUEL **MARQUEZ**
World Lightweight Champion 50-5-1 (37)

Last Year's Ranking: 2
Status Report: Pay little attention to Marquez's stunningly one-sided loss to Floyd Mayweather; Mayweather would have beaten 99.999 percent of humans on the planet 160 pounds and under that night. Instead, recall his masterful and inspired win over the 10-years younger Juan Diaz (KO 9) as proof that against mortals, he remains one of the best in the world. He's not in his prime anymore, but a just past-it Marquez is better than anyone at lightweight.
Future: A return to 135 pounds and at least a couple more big wins before he starts to appreciably show his age.

Marquez knocks out Diaz
PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE

1 MANNY PACQUIAO

The Ring 100

PHOTO BY JAY DIRECTO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

6. NONITO **DONAIRE** WBA Junior Bantamweight titleholder 22-1 (14)

Last Year's Ranking: 21
Status Report: Donaire has been riding high since his July 2007 kayo of Vic Darchinyan, but fought just once on '08. A change in promoters from Gary Shaw to Top Rank resulted in the busier schedule he'd hoped for and he took advantage, beating Moruti Mthalane (KO 6) and Raul Martinez (KO 4) in flyweight title defenses, and then taking an interim title at 115 against Rafael Concepcion (W 12). And listen: The kid's just 26 years old.
Future: There's no shortage of interesting matches at 115, including one against Darchinyan in a return, or Nobuo Nashiro. Look for Top Rank to try to build him into the next Manny Pacquiao.

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Jennings crumples at Cotto's feet

7. MIGUEL **COTTO** Welterweight 34-1 (27)

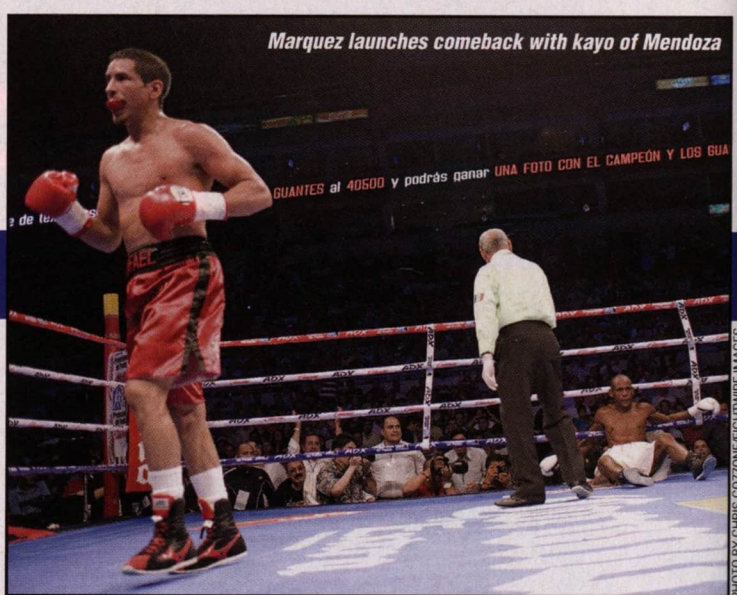
Last Year's Ranking: 9
Status Report: What happened against Manny Pacquiao on November 14 will determine how you see Cotto today, but as this is written you could almost see him as an undefeated fighter. It is at least a reasonable possibility that Antonio Margarito's wraps were loaded when he beat Cotto, and though he looked slightly worse for wear, Cotto came back to beat Michael Jennings (KO 5) and the tough Joshua Clottey (W 12). It's hard to name anyone who has faced tougher competition over the last several years than Cotto, which speaks volumes about where he is.
Future: If he beats Pacquiao, the hope is a mega fight with Floyd Mayweather. A match with the winner of Mosley-Berto would be almost as good.

8. CELESTINO **CABALLERO** IBF/WBA Junior Featherweight Titleholder 33-2 (23)

Last Year's Ranking: 24
Status Report: Just when you thought Caballero couldn't make yet another drastic jump in these rankings—last year he leapt from 53 to 24—this year he breaks the top 10. Why? Simple. Three straight wins, one an absolute rout of heretofore undefeated and well regarded Steve Molitor (KO 4). The others, over Jeffrey Mathebula (W 12) and Francisco Leal (KO 8) underscore how powerful this beanpole is and why a lot of other 122-pounders want no part of him.
Future: Nothing was signed as we went to press, but we'd love to see him against Poonsawat Kratingaenggym or Juan Manuel Lopez.

9. ISRAEL **VAZQUEZ** Junior Featherweight 44-4 (32)

Last Year's Ranking: 5
Status Report: Vazquez was out for 19 months with an eye injury following his colossal third battle with Rafael Marquez. In his eagerly awaited return he struggled and bled (so what else is new?) but showed his class with an exciting win over tough journeyman Angel Antonio Priolo (KO 9). We don't know how much longer Vazquez can keep this stuff up, so catch him now while you still can.
Future: You have to ask? A fourth match against Marquez, as macabre as it is, is all but a sure thing.



Marquez launches comeback with kayo of Mendoza
PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

10. RAFAEL **MARQUEZ** Junior Featherweight 38-5 (34)

Last Year's Ranking: 8
Status Report: Fought just once after heroic loss to Vazquez in their rubber match, beating Jose Francisco Mendoza (KO 3) in Mexico. If anyone deserved an easy fight it was Marquez, and Mendoza gave him one. To have fought the way he did in the third match with Vazquez and come up the loser is the height of injustice. Damn that shaky chin.
Future: As much as you want to see a fourth match with Vazquez, Marquez wants it more. And he'll get it.

9 ISRAEL VAZQUEZ

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

11. PAUL **WILLIAMS** Middleweight/Junior Middleweight 37-1 (27)

Last Year's ranking: 12
Status Report: Williams was set to challenge world middleweight champion Kelly Pavlik on December 5 in Atlantic City, but the bout was postponed for the third time because Pavlik's staph-infected left hand had "not progressed as projected." In two previous outing since last years' RING 100, "The Punisher" dominated Winky Wright (W 12) and Verno Phillips (KO 8).
Future: Won't wait for Pavlik forever. Could drop back down to junior middle and maybe win vacant RING belt by taking on Cory Spinks.

12. HOZUMI **HASEGAWA**
WBC Bantamweight Titleholder 27-2 (11)

Last Year's Ranking: 23
Status Report: THE RING's top-ranked bantamweight did nothing to diminish himself in the last year, making two title defenses. Neither Vusi Malinga (KO 1) nor Nestor Rocha (KO 1) presented any kind of challenge. That's the good news. The bad is that both bouts took place in Japan, giving further weight to the belief that Hasegawa will never leave his homeland to fight. And that's a shame.
Future: Scheduled to defend against Alvaro Perez, a southpaw from Nicaragua, in Kobe, Japan, on December 18.

PHOTO BY AFP/JIJI PRESS/GETTY IMAGES

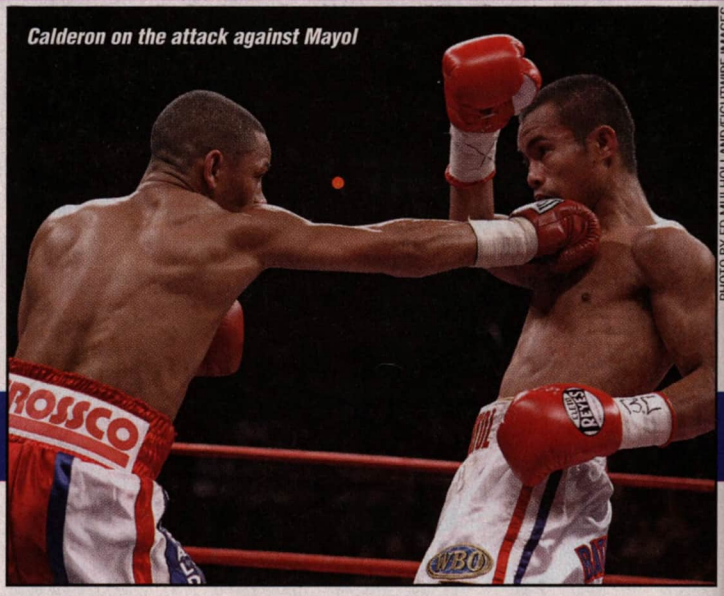
Hasegawa jabs Rocha into a corner

13. ARTHUR **ABRAHAM** Super Middleweight 31-0 (25)

Last Year's Ranking: 18
Status Report: Abraham's bludgeoning of Jermain Taylor in Berlin in the opening round of Showtime's Super Six tourney was evidence of "King Arthur's" innumerable strengths. It complemented his wins over Raul Marquez (KO 6), Lajuan Simon (W 12), and Mahir Oral (KO 10), and showed why many pick him to win the tournament outright.
Future: A showdown with fellow tourney favorite Mikkel Kessler in the final.

14. IVAN **CALDERON** World Junior Flyweight Champion 33-0-1 (6)

Last Year's Ranking: 10
Status Report: Calderon's slight descent in this analysis compared to last year is due primarily to the nature of his last two wins, both over Rodel Mayol (Tech. Win 7 both times). Both bouts were stopped because of a cut on Calderon's forehead. Nevertheless, "Iron Boy" remains one of the purest boxers in the business and if you don't believe us, consider how well you must box to remain undefeated as long as he has when you can't break an egg.
Future: Nothing signed as we went to press, but we wouldn't be surprised to see a match against former titleholder Ulises Solis.



Calderon on the attack against Mayol
PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

15. KELLY **PAVLIK**
World Middleweight Champion 35-1 (31)

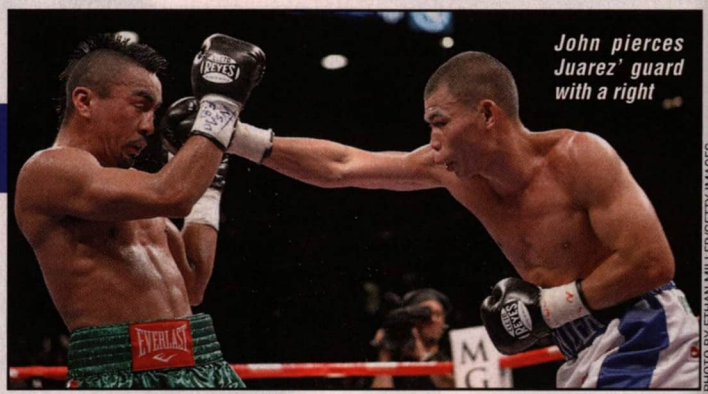
Last Year's Ranking: 11
Status Report: The latest postponement of Pavlik's fight with Paul Williams means that the middleweight champ's only fight in 2009 was his uninspired victory over petrified Marco Antonio Rubio (KO 9) on February 21 in Youngstown, Ohio.
Future: How much longer the stubborn staph infection will keep him on the sidelines remains uncertain. In some way, it's been more detrimental to his career than the boxing lesson Hopkins gave him.

13 ARTHUR ABRAHAM

PHOTO BY MARTIN ROSE/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

16. CHAD **DAWSON** IBF Lightweight Titleholder 28-0 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 25
Status Report: By the time you read this Dawson will likely again have beaten Glen Johnson in a close, grueling distance match that was in this case more or less foisted on him by the boxing press. He was similarly put upon in his previous fight with Antonio Tarver (W 12), which was the fulfillment of a contractual obligation and demonstrated again that Dawson's speed and skills are going to make him very hard to beat indeed.
Future: Would it be too much to ask for the winner of Hopkins-Jones II to meet "Bad Chad"?



John pierces Juarez' guard with a right

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

17. CHRIS **JOHN**
WBA Featherweight Titleholder 43-0-2 (22)

Last Year's Ranking: 19
Status Report: John's stock keeps rising, and not just because of his win over Hiroyuki Enoki (W 12). Remember, he left the safe confines of Indonesia and took on Rocky Juarez—in Houston of all places! The dubious outcome of that meeting (D 12) was righted for the most part with John's win in the return (W 12) even if he almost got knocked out in the last 20 seconds. John isn't the most skilled guy out there, but when you watch him you can see why nobody's figured him out yet.
Future: The way the WBA keeps creating titles (John is the "super" champion, while Yuriorkis Gamboa recently won the "regular" title), John may meet himself in a title unification fight if he's not careful.

18. GLEN **JOHNSON** Light Heavyweight 49-12-2 (33)

Last Year's Ranking: 36
Status Report: The odds are against Johnson, at a well-preserved 40, having beaten the younger, faster Chad Dawson in their match on November 7. Still, he held his own over the year, beating Aaron Norwood (KO 4) and Daniel Judah (W 10) and rallying the press corps around his quest for a rematch with Dawson. Forty years old or not, he's an easy night for no 175-pounder alive.
Future: If he's beaten Dawson by the time you read this, a rubber match, or maybe a rematch with Hopkins. If he loses to Dawson, a slow, steady descent.

19. MIKKEL **KESSLER**
WBA Super Middleweight Titleholder 42-1 (32)

Last Year's Ranking: 20
Status Report: Having finally and apparently recovered sufficiently from the undressing Joe Calzaghe gave him in November 2007, Kessler got going late in '09, beating Danilo Haussler (KO 3) and Gusmyr Perdomo (KO 4) before heading into the super middleweight tournament against Andre Ward in California. We suspect he will have beaten Ward by the time you read this, using his fast hands, skills, and greater experience.
Future: He's our pick to win the Super Six tournament, so his dance card will be full with the others in the group for the foreseeable future.

PHOTO BY HENNING BAGGER/GETTY IMAGES

Kessler en route to fourth-round TKO of Perdomo

20. WLADIMIR **KLITSCHKO** World Heavyweight Champion 53-3 (47)

Last Year's Ranking: 46
Status Report: He finally did it. By grinding up Ruslan Chagaev (KO 9), rated third at the time, the younger Klitschko graduated from the "consensus best" heavyweight to the world champion. The win was crucial; the only other victory since last year's analysis was a distasteful bludgeoning of a hapless Hasim Rahman (KO 7), which did nothing to enhance Klitschko's reputation anywhere outside of Mannheim.
Future: Shoulder tendon surgery sidelined Little Brother for the remainder of 2009. He is expected to defend against Eddie Chambers in the spring of 2010.

20 WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO

PHOTO BY NORBERT WEIDEMANN

21. FERNANDO MONTIEL Bantamweight 39-2-2 (29)

Last Year's Ranking: 16
Status Report: Montiel is scheduled to have faced indefatigable veteran Gerry Penalosa in Mexico, on December 18, in a matchup that Montiel's considerable speed should carry. It was a mostly good year for "El Cochulito," with a jump up to bantamweight and wins over Juan Alberto Rojas (W 10) and Diego Oscar Silva (KO 3). But his vulnerability, which is part of what makes him so exciting, almost did him in against Alejandro Valdez (Tech. Draw 3)
Future: Assuming he gets by Penalosa, he could feed on the flotsam of the WBO endlessly. We'd love to see him against young gun Abner Mares.

22. VITALI KLITSCHKO
WBC Heavyweight Titleholder 38-2 (37)

Last Year's Ranking: 47
Status Report: As we went to press, it was being reported that Klitschko would face Kevin Johnson on December 12 in Switzerland, and regardless of how that turns out, Big Brother had already turned in the Comeback of the Year. Almost four years out of the ring and he dominates Sam Peter (KO 8), Juan Carlos Gomez (KO 9), and Chris Arreola (KO 10). No tune-ups, no injuries, all stoppage wins, and hardly a moment of anxiety in 27 rounds. Call it the quality of the heavyweight division, call it the power of unorthodoxy, but call Big Brother a winner.

PHOTO BY ALEXANDER HASSENSTEIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES
Gomez can't avoid Vitali's long left

Future: Between Vitali and Wladimir, they're cleaning out the division. What happens when they're the only two left?

23. ANTONIO MARGARITO Welterweight 37-6 (27)

Last Year's Ranking: 6
Status Report: Margarito's 17-point tumble is attributable in the main not to his shocking loss to Shane Mosley—there's no dishonor there—or to his subsequent inactivity. They work against him, but not as much as the revelation that his wraps were loaded going into the Mosley fight, as well as the very reasonable possibility that they were similarly doctored in all of his big wins. Can he fight? Absolutely. We just aren't sure anymore how well.
Future: Margarito will be eligible to reapply for a boxing license in California in February 2010. If he can put together a couple good wins, he's right back in business.

24. JOSHUA CLOTTEY Welterweight 35-3 (20)

Last Year's Ranking: 33
Status Report: Match with Carlos Quintana on the Pavlik-Williams card was in limbo at press time due to postponement of main event. Therefore, Clottey's only fight this year could very well end up being his 12-round spilt decision loss Miguel Cotto.
Future: Even if he eventually beats Quintana, Clottey is pretty much frozen out of the very biggest fight at 147. But if a comebacking Antonio Margarito is looking for a meaningful dance partner, we know where he can find one.

25. EDWIN VALERO
WBC Lightweight Titleholder 25-0 (25)

Last Year's Ranking: 48
Status Report: For those of us whose curiosity about Valero was stoked by all those grainy YouTube videos, his blazing win over the competent Antonio Pitalua (KO 2) in Texas was a resounding payoff. This guy is a born puncher. The bad news is that he sat on his hands the rest of the year. He was tentatively scheduled to fight on December 12 in Venezuela as we went to press, but big deal. We want him on HBO, twice a month.
Future: His alphabet mandatory as we went to press appeared to be Mexico's Antonio Demarco, but you know how that goes. We'd be happy to see him against any 135-pounder in the top 10.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES
Valero tears into Pitalua

24 JOSHUA CLOTTEY

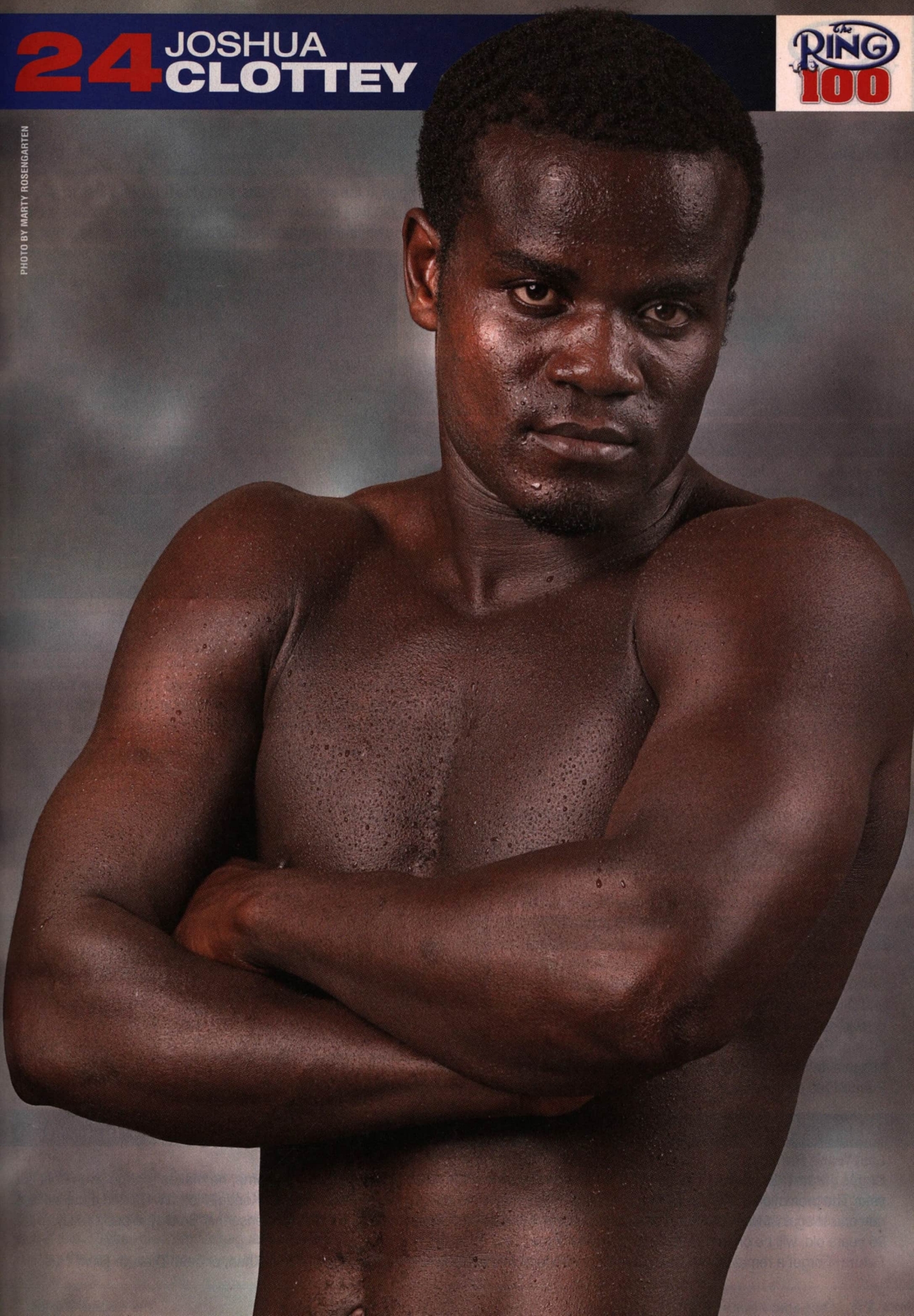


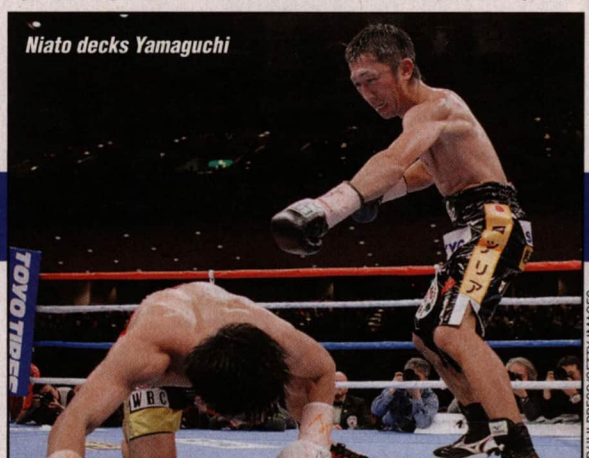
PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

26. RICKY HATTON Junior Welterweight 45-2 (32)

Last Year's Ranking: 13

Status Report: The former 140-pound world champion hasn't made a peep in the seven months since his humbling loss to Manny Pacquiao (KO by 2) and who can blame him? Never mind that his two career losses have come against the best fighters on the planet. When you go to sleep the way he did against Pacquiao, it takes a while to get your gumption back. There's also the possibility that, even at just 31 years old, he is finished.

Future: If Juan Diaz beats Paulie Malignaggi in their on-again, off-again rematch—and we mean beats him, not skipped by with another gift—you could see Hatton-Diaz in 2010. If Hatton's got anything left, that's an interesting little party.



Niato decks Yamaguchi

PHOTO BY AFP/JIJI PRESS/GETTY IMAGES

27. DAISUKE NAITO
WBC Flyweight Titleholder 35-2-3 (22)

Last Year's Ranking: 32

Status Report: By the time you read this, Naito will have met Koki Kameda in a huge event in Japan. Prior to that, it was another year, another couple alphabet title defenses for Naito. Wins over Shingo Yamaguchi (KO 11) and Xiong Zhao Zhong (W 12) get him up a couple notches from the previous year when he struggled a bit more than usual.

Future: Depends on what has happened against Kameda, but at 35 and with chinks in the armor starting to show, we don't imagine Naito will be this highly ranked a year from now.

28. JUAN CARLOS SALGADO Junior Lightweight 21-0-1 (15)

Last Year's Raking: Unranked

Status Report: If you'd never heard of Salgado before his shocking first-round kayo of star-in-the-making Jorge Linares, don't feel bad; you're not alone. Salgado cracks the top-30 based entirely on the left hook he planted on Linares' chin in Tokyo in October. Sure it represented his first win over anyone who is a household name somewhere other than in his own household. But it's huge.

Future: If Salgado and his benefactors want to build something long-lasting, they'll take things slowly. If they want a big score, they'll take a rematch with Linares.

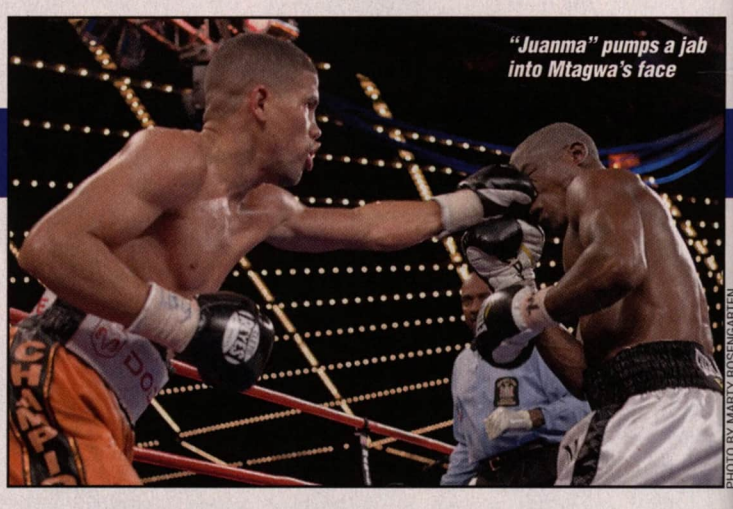

"Juanma" pumps a jab into Mtagwa's face

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

29. JUAN MANUEL LOPEZ
Junior Featherweight 27-0 (24)

Last Year's Ranking: 34

Status Report: Lopez won some new friends and lost some old ones with his more-difficult-than-expected win in October over hardheaded Rogers Mtagwa (W 12). But it proved he can hang in there when hurt. Wins earlier in the year over Sergio Manuel Medina (KO 1), Gerry Penalosa (KO 10), and Olivier Lontchi (KO 9) were far less taxing and therefore proved not nearly as much.

Future: Fans and some press are calling for a rematch with Mtagwa, but it's not likely. "Juanma" is scheduled to fight in Puerto Rico on January 23, and then down the road a showdown with featherweight Cuban star Yuriorkis Gamboa.

30. TIMOTHY BRADLEY Junior Welterweight 24-0 (11) with 1 no-contest

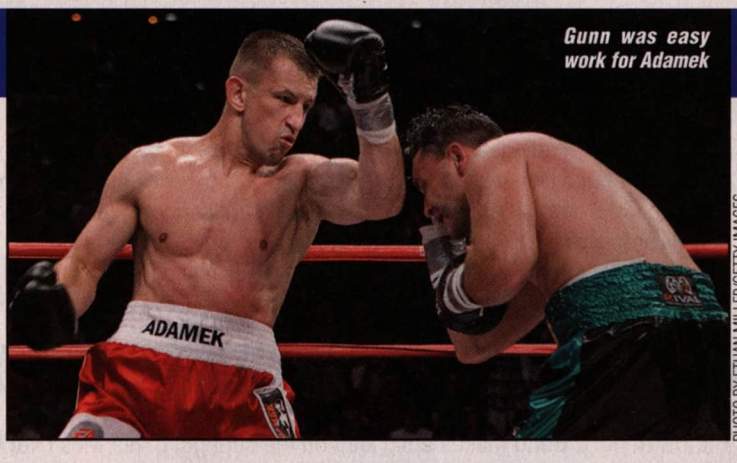
Last Year's Ranking: 63

Status Report: Bradley faces Lamont Peterson on December 12, and regardless of the outcome, he makes a huge jump from last year. The promotion is the result of an impressive victory over the dangerous and very capable Kendall Holt (W 12) and a cut-induced no-contest against Nate Campbell that looked every bit like a victory in the making. We get the sense that Bradley, a baby, really, at just 26 years old, will be on this list for a long time to come.

Future: Forget a rematch with Campbell. Who needs it? We'd rather see Bradley against Amir Khan, or Juan Diaz, or Ricky Hatton.

31. TOMASZ ADAMEK
Cruiserweight World Champion 39-1 (27)

Last year's Ranking: 70
Status Report: Adamek's drubbing of 41-year-old Andrew Golota (KO 5) doesn't prove much, but it might lead to Adamek staying at heavyweight. However, his wins at cruiser over Steve Cunningham (W 12), Johnathan Banks (KO 8), and Bobby Gunn (KO 4) sure did. Okay, not so much Gunn, but certainly the others. Since his only career loss, which came against Chad Dawson, Adamek has developed into a sound technical fighter and a real puncher.
Future: If he stays at 200 pounds, a rematch with Cunningham would be excellent. Their first fight was outstanding.



Gunn was easy work for Adamek

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

32. JOAN GUZMAN Lightweight 29-0 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 29
Status Report: By the time you read this, Guzman will have faced Ali Funeka for a vacant alphabet title, which is a tall order for one as inactive as Guzman has been. Generously talented, but apparently only moderately disciplined, he fought just once in 2008, beating one Ameth Diaz (W 12) in the Dominican Republic. That, after failing to make weight for a bout against Nate Campbell in '07. A win over Funeka will go some way toward restoring his reputation.
Future: If he beats Funeka, interesting choices at lightweight abound. If he loses, a move to 140.

33. HUMBERTO SOTO
Junior Lightweight 49-7-2 (32)

Last Year's Ranking: 30
Status Report: Will jump to 135 pounds for an alphabet title fight against the capable Miguel Acosta on December 19. Prior to that, he had a productive year, beating Francisco Lorenzo in a rematch (W 12), Antonio Davis (KO 4), Benoit Gaudet (KO 9) and Aristides Perez (KO 2). He was hoping for bigger-money fights against Robert Guerrero or Jorge Linares, but they never happened.
Future: Has interesting options at 135 that include Juan Manuel Marquez, Michael Katsidis, and Edwin Valero.

Soto connect against Gaudet

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

34. STEVE CUNNINGHAM Cruiserweight 22-2 (11)

Last Year's Ranking: 58
Status Report: It was a year of mixed blessings for Cunningham, who lost his alphabet title to Tomasz Adamek in one of the best fights of the year (L 12), but rebounded seven months later to decision former beltholder Wayne Braithwaite in Florida. Did better against Adamek than anyone save for Chad Dawson, but suffered several knockdowns that gave Adamek the victory. Lack of serious punching power does him no favors.
Future: When Tomasz Adamek relinquished the IBF trinket, the New Jersey-based alphabet organization ordered promoters to begin negotiations for a bout between Cunningham and Matt Godfrey to fill the vacancy.

35. ROMAN GONZALEZ WBA Strawweight Titleholder 24-0 (20)

Last Year's Ranking: 37
Status Report: The Ring's top-rated strawweight proved his highly improbable upset of Yutaka Nida in '08 was no fluke, beating Miguel Tellez (KO 3), Francisco Rosas (W 12), and former WBC titleholder Katsunari Takayama (W 12) in '09. Rosas gave him more trouble than anyone expected and that two of his last three have gone the distance have some questioning his credentials as a power puncher. But this 22-year-old from Managua is all upside.
Future: A match against countryman and fellow bomb-thrower Juan Palacios would be a natural.

36. POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM
WBA Junior Featherweight Titleholder 39-1 (28)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Kratingaenggym's appearance comes on the strength of his back-to-back clubbings of Rafael Hernandez (KO 9) and Ireland's Bernard Dunne (KO 3). Outside of those two, believe us, you haven't heard of anyone on his recent record, with the possible exception of Somsak Sithchatchawal, whom Kratingaenggym stopped in 11 rounds in '08. Other victims of note include Leo Gamez and Ricardo Cordoba, who fell to Kratingaenggym in '05.
Future: Junior featherweight is a pretty strong division and the ideal fight would be a showdown between Kratingaenggym and division leader Celestino Caballero to name THE RING champion. We are not getting our hopes up.

37. ANDRE BERTO WBC Welterweight Titleholder 25-0 (19)

Last Year's Ranking: 78
Status Report: Berto makes a big leap on the strength of his wins over Luis Collazo (W 12) and tough Juan Urango (W 12). Was criticized in both fights, for taking too many risks against Collazo and not enough against Urango. Still, both wins answered questions about him, namely that he can recover from being hurt, as he did against Collazo, and that he can stay disciplined for all 12 rounds, as he did against Urango.
Future: As of this writing, Berto was tentatively scheduled to face Shane Mosley on January 30 in Las Vegas in a fascinating match. If he wins in good form, he becomes a star.

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

Moreno wins rematch with Sidorenko

38. ANSELMO MORENO
WBA Bantamweight Titleholder 27-1-1 (9)

Last Year's Ranking: 54
Status Report: Moreno may not be the most exciting titleholder out there—look again at his kayo percentage—but he is one of the busiest. By the time you read this, he will have faced Frederic Pactrac in France. And since last year's analysis he fought Rolly Matsushita (W 12), Wladimir Sidorenko in a rematch to their May, '08 meeting (W 12), Mahyar Monshipour (W 12), and Jorge Ortero (KO 6). It's not Henry Armstrong-busy, but by today's standards, it's damn close.
Future: Why not a fight with Hozumi Hasegawa so we can crown a RING champion here already?

PHOTO BY ALEXIS CUAREZMA/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Guerrero clips Hinojosa with a hook

39. ROBERT GUERRERO
IBF Junior Lightweight Titleholder 24-1-1 (16)

Last Year's Ranking: 49
Status Report: Last year was a mixed bag for Guerrero. He stopped Edel Ruiz with a bodyshot (KO 1), then, against tougher than expected Daud Cino Yordan, was cut and chose not to continue (No Dec. 2). The backlash was immediate and intense, but he returned to form against Efren Hinojosa (KO 8) and well-regarded Malcolm Klassen (W 12). Guerrero can box a little and punch a little, and together it works for him.
Future: Nothing signed at press time, but we wouldn't be surprised to see Guerrero against Cassius Baloyi some time in 2010.

40. BRIAN VILORIA IBF Junior Flyweight Titleholder 26-2 (15)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Viloria is scheduled to face rival Omar Nino a third time, on December 5. He appears finally to have come into his own, winning seven straight after dropping a decision to Edgar Sosa in April 2007. He arrives here after a strong 2009, during which he stopped the entertaining but vulnerable titleholder Ulises Solis (KO 11) and defended the alphabet strap against Jesus Iribe (W 12). At 28, Viloria should be in his prime.
Future: If he beats Nino, a showdown with Ivan Calderon would be wonderful.

37 ANDRE BERTO

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

41. PONGSAKLEK **WONJONGKAM** Flyweight 73-3-1 (39)

Last Year's Ranking: 43
Status Report: The work horse of the flyweights will likely have beaten Richard Garcia by the time you read this, and in any event, refuses to go away, probably hoping for yet another match against rival Daisuke Naito. He had a good 2009, beating Shahram Toradied (KO 2), Julio Cesar Miranda (W 12) and Takahisa Samuda (KO 6). He can still stay with the better guys in the division.
Future: Provided he keeps winning, another fight with Naito is inevitable.

42. AMIR **KHAN** WBA Junior Welterweight Titleholder 21-1 (15)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Was favored to beat challenger Dmitriy Salita in New Castle on December 5, and a victory would assure continued high ranking in one of the game's better divisions. He recovered nicely from a shocking loss to puncher Breidis Prescott (KO by 1) to beat Oisin Fagan (KO 2), Marco Antonio Barrera (Tech. Win 5) and Andriy Kotelnik (W 12). Shaky chin might always present problems, but not if he lands first.
Future: If he beats Salita, look for something big. Khan against Ricky Hatton would bring the entire UK to a halt.

43. JORGE **LINARES** Junior Lightweight 27-1 (18)

Last Year's Ranking: 26
Status Report: Linares suffered his first career loss against undefeated but unheralded Juan Carlos Salgado in Tokyo. A wide left hook dropped him and though he was able to beat the count, the fight was stopped after a second knockdown. Not the stuff of the next Oscar De La Hoya, but one knockout loss doesn't have to ruin a career, nor does it preclude future success. Look at Amir Khan.
Future: Linares' people will want to go right after Salgado in a rematch and when you're the star that Linares is (at least in Japan), you get what you want.

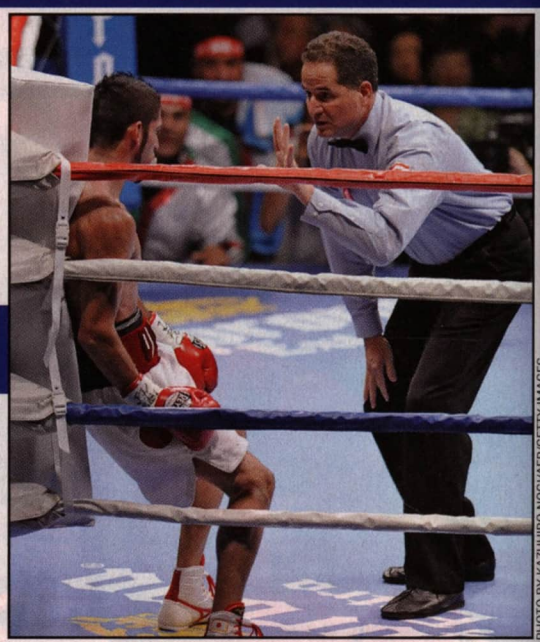


PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Linares sags as ref Luis Pabon counts

44. HUGO **CAZARES** WBA Junior Bantamweight Titleholder 30-6-2 (22)

Last Year's Ranking: 38
Status Report: Cazares had a busy year, jumping up in weight again and getting good business done, even if two of his victims. Jorge Romero (KO 3) and Margarito Lopez (KO 1), had sub-.500 records. The fights that counted came against Roberto Vasquez (W 11) and Nobuo Nashiro (D 12). Junior bantamweight might be Cazares' weight class.
Future: Nothing was signed as we went to press, but a rematch with Nashiro would make the most sense.

45. NATE **CAMPBELL** Junior Welterweight 33-5-1 (25) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: 17
Status Report: After a big jump in the ratings last year thanks to his win over Juan Diaz, Campbell drops back down to earth this year. He failed to make weight and struggled to beat Ali Funeka (W 12), then was getting his head handed to him by Timothy Bradley when a cut caused by a head butt resulted in a no-contest. Whether or not it was, as it seemed, Campbell's apparent enthusiasm for a stoppage implied a willingness to surrender that was unseemly.
Future: At 37, Campbell doesn't have a lot of time. A rematch against Bradley appears unlikely and he's still viewed as too dangerous to take for granted. It won't be easy.

Campbell wings a left hook at Funeka

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

42 AMIR KHAN

PHOTO BY LANDRY MAJOR/GETTY IMAGES

Diaz wades into Malignaggi

PHOTO BY JOE CORDOVA/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

46. JUAN DIAZ
Junior Welterweight 35-2 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: 22
Status Report: Not the best year for "The Baby Bull," hence his descent from last year. The loss to Juan Manuel Marquez (KO 9) was damaging enough, but not fatal, Marquez being Marquez. But when you add in Diaz' highly controversial win over Paul Malignaggi (W 12) in Houston, well, you have all the right ingredients for a major demotion.
Future: Has to beat Malignaggi convincingly, and if he does, look for a fight with Ricky Hatton.

47. PAULIE MALIGNAGGI Junior Welterweight 26-3 (5)

Last Year's Ranking: 62
Status Report: It was ruin followed by a measure of redemption for Malignaggi. A disastrous showing against Ricky Hatton (KO by 11) was followed by the firing of Buddy McGirt, a comeback win over Christopher Fernandez (W 8), and then, in a full return to the style he rode to the top, a dubious decision loss to Juan Diaz (L 12) in Texas. A substantial majority of press thought Malignaggi was the clear victim of hometown judging.
Future: If he can beat Diaz in a rematch, he will have a smorgasbord of options.

48. CORY SPINKS IBF Junior Middleweight Titleholder 37-5 (11)

Last Year's Ranking: 42
Status Report: Just when you thought the market had completely dried up for fighters who are dull, can't punch, and when they win a big fight cry like bipolar menopausal housewives, back comes our favorite subject case. Spinks didn't do much in 2009, but he did manage a razor-thin win over Deandre Latimore (W 12) to win an alphabet title. If Don King had juice anymore we'd credit him with keeping Spinks in the title picture, but DK runs boxing these days like Queen Elizabeth II runs the United Kingdom. The thing is, Spinks can fight.
Future: Every time we think it's the last time we'll read Spinks' name before a "W," he surprises us. So who the hell knows anymore?

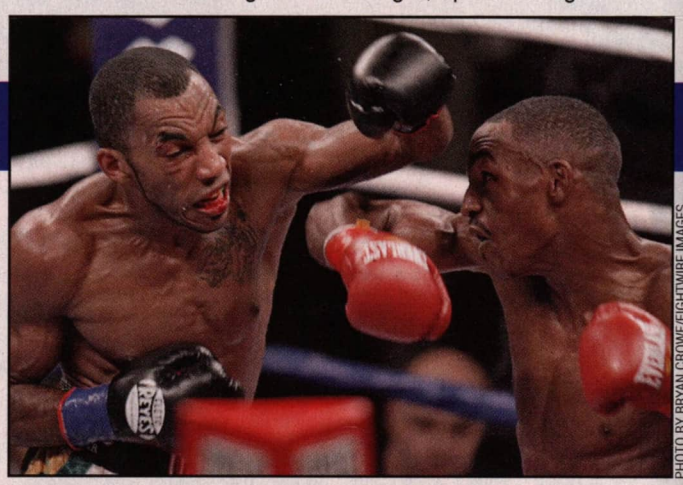


PHOTO BY BRYAN CROWE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Alexander (right) fends off Witter

49. DEVON ALEXANDER
WBC Junior Welterweight Titleholder 19-0 (12)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Alexander crashes the top 50 in his first appearance in this analysis, largely on the weight of his win over Junior Witter in August (KO 9). The kid can punch, he's got good fundamental skills, and in Kevin Cunningham, a trainer who seems a constant threat to bust a cap in his ass if he doesn't do as he's told. Sounds to us like a recipe for a long, successful career. And brace yourself, fogies: Alexander is just 22 years old. He's got all the time in the world.
Future: We anticipate Alexander will take things slowly, so look for a defense against some anonymous WBC mandatory.

50. DENKAOSAN KAOVICHIT WBA Flyweight Titleholder 48-1-1 (20)

Last Year's Ranking: 96
Status Report: Kaovichit finally fulfilled early promise with a trio of meaningful wins in '09, including a rematch stoppage of Takefumi Sakata (KO 2). Close wins over Hiroyuki Hisataka (W 12) and Daiki Kameda (W 12) in Thailand and Japan, respectively, followed, bringing Kaovichit a significantly higher rating this year. See what a little gumption will do?
Future: Expect a meeting with Koki Kameda sooner rather than later.

56. ULISES SOLIS
Junior Flyweight 29-2-2 (20)

Last Year's Ranking: 40
Status Report: Solis' entertaining alphabet title reign came to an abrupt end at the baby-sized fists of Brian Viloria (KO 11). This means that in 40 years the answer to the trivia question, "Against whom did Ulises Solis make his final title defense?" will be Nerys Espinoza (W 12), who Solis beat in Mexico. Solis wasted no time after the loss to Viloria, beating one Direcu Cabarca (W 8), also in Mexico.
Future: There's always a market for fun, hard-hitting vulnerable guys like Solis. He'll have no shortage of dates.

Solis absorbs a right from Viloria
PHOTO BY JAY DIRECTO/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

57. OMAR NARVAEZ Flyweight 30-0-2 (19)

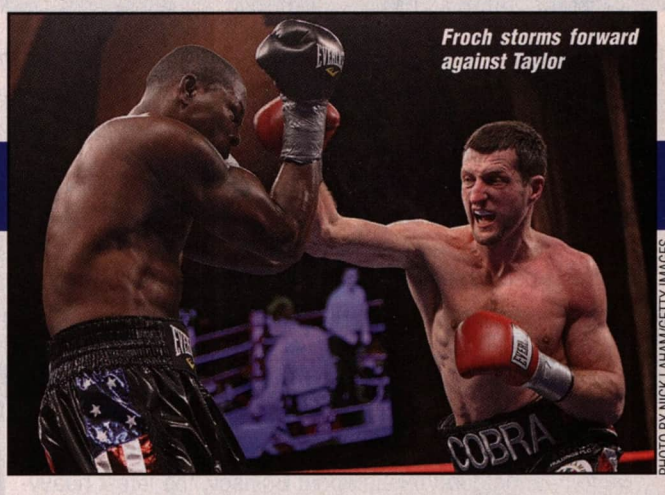
Last Year's Ranking: 57
Status Report: It's status quo for Narvaez, a skilled little guy who fights fairly frequently, but has no apparent interest in facing the best guys in his class. He stepped it up a bit with a win over previously undefeated American Rayonta Whitfield (KO 10) and then stopped the useful but well worn Omar Soto (KO 11). He can fight but apparently is fearful that the atmosphere outside Argentina would be harmful to his system.
Future: Nothing signed as we went to press, but we're going to go out on a limb and say to expect a fight against a WBO mandatory, in Argentina.

58. LUCIAN BUTE IBF Super Middleweight Titleholder 24-0 (19)

Last Year's Ranking: 61
Status Report: By the time you read this, Bute will have fought a rematch with thick-skinned Librado Andrade, who nearly stopped Bute in the last round of their first fight (W 12). The general sense is that the hometown referee helped Bute make it to the bell, which helped get the rematch made. So did Bute's easy blowout of shopworn Fernando Zuniga (KO 4). Southpaw Bute is a pretty good boxer-puncher with reasonably fast hands and sound technical skills. He can fight.
Future: The Super Six tournament, to which Bute was not invited, ties up most of the other top 168-pounders for the foreseeable future. But when it's done, watch Bute, if he's still around, get the winner.

59. CARL FROCH
WBC Super Middleweight Titleholder 26-0 (21)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Froch crashes the top 100 on the weight of wins over Jean Pascal (W 12), Jermain Taylor (KO 12), and Andre Dirrell (W 12), and is proof that if you believe strongly enough in yourself, after a while everyone else believes in you too. Froch is a bit crude and from all evidence, only modestly talented, but has convinced everyone he is a white, 168-pound, British Sonny Liston. Maybe he is.
Future: Next stop in the Super Six tourney: Mikkel Kessler.



Froch storms forward against Taylor
PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES

60. ALEXANDER MUNOZ Junior Bantamweight 33-3 (27)

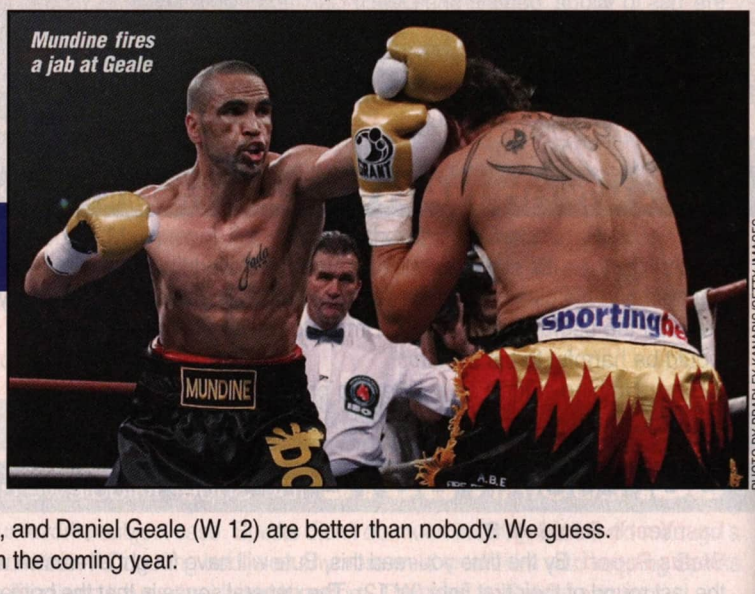
Last Year's Ranking: 31
Status Report: Little power punchers like Munoz don't come around very often, but when they do it's helpful if they fight more than once a year. "El Explosivo" fought just once after his loss to Cristian Mijares, beating the novice Breilor Teran (W 10). Hence his 29-point slide from last year. A proposed match with Felix Machado, which will have come off by the time you read this, will help.
Future: Who wouldn't want to see Munoz against fellow rock-thrower Vic Darchinyan?

61. JEAN PASCAL WBC Light Heavyweight Titleholder 24-1 (16)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: The talented Pascal breaks into the top 100 following a productive year in which he lost in a barnburner to Carl Froch (L 12), and came back to beat Pablo Nievas (KO 5), Adrian Diaconu (W 12) for an alphabet trinket, and Silvio Branco (KO 10) in defense of said trinket. Pascal gives the impression that he's learning on the job, but makes up for a lot with speed and athleticism.
Future: Scheduled to face Diaconu in a rematch in Quebec on December 11.

62. STEVE MOLITOR Junior Featherweight 30-1 (12)

Last Year's Ranking: 50
Status Report: What a nightmare it must have been for Molitor, riding high and undefeated, to get destroyed the way he was by Celestino Caballero (KO by 4). We can't remember the last time a matchup that looked competitive on paper turned into such a rout. To his credit, Molitor has rebounded, beating Heriberto Ruiz (W 12) and Feliciano Ledezma (KO 5). As we went to press, he was scheduled to fight in Ontario on November 21.
Future: Molitor's a skilled guy and a good fighter who will have trouble against any of the killers rated ahead of him at 122 pounds.



Mundine fires a jab at Geale

PHOTO BY BRADLEY KANARIS/GETTY IMAGES

63. ANTHONY MUNDINE Middleweight 37-3 (23)

Last Year's Ranking: 60
Status Report: You can say a lot of things about Mundine, but you can't call him lazy. He was scheduled to fight Alejandro Falliga in Tasmania just after press time, his fourth fight since last year's analysis. That's the good news. The bad is that his opponents may not be the best fighters on their blocks, never mind in the middleweight division. But Rafael Pintos (W 10), Shannan Taylor (W 12), and Daniel Geale (W 12) are better than nobody. We guess.
Future: We don't see Mundine doing anything differently in the coming year.

64. ALEXANDER POVETKIN Heavyweight 17-0 (12)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: The Ring's highest-ranked heavyweight under 6'7" fought just once since last year's analysis, a win over prospect Jason Estrada in Germany (W 10). He breaks the top 100 anyway because victories over the last couple years against Chris Byrd, Larry Donald, and Eddie Chambers say he should. Povetkin is a busy, determined guy who will outwork a lot of heavyweights. Not the Klitschkos, but other guys.
Future: At new trainer Teddy Atlas' urging, Povetkin, Wladimir Klitschko's IBF mandatory, apparently stepped aside to let Chambers get the next shot so Atlas would have time to work his magic. Expect to see a re-tooled Povetkin in a tune-up soon.

Boytsov blocks Gavern's left with his forearm

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

65. DENIS BOYTSOV Heavyweight 26-0 (21)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: We know we're going out on a limb here, but we're hearing good things about Boytsov, the latest heavyweight creation of famed Russian trainer Fritz Sdunek. Boytsov is undersized by recent standards, but has fast, heavy hands that so far have led him to wins over Taras Bidenko (KO 6) and Jason Gavern (KO 7). And he's active—four fights in '08, three more in '09.
Future: Don't expect to see him soon. He'll be brought along slowly.

64 ALEXANDER POVETKIN

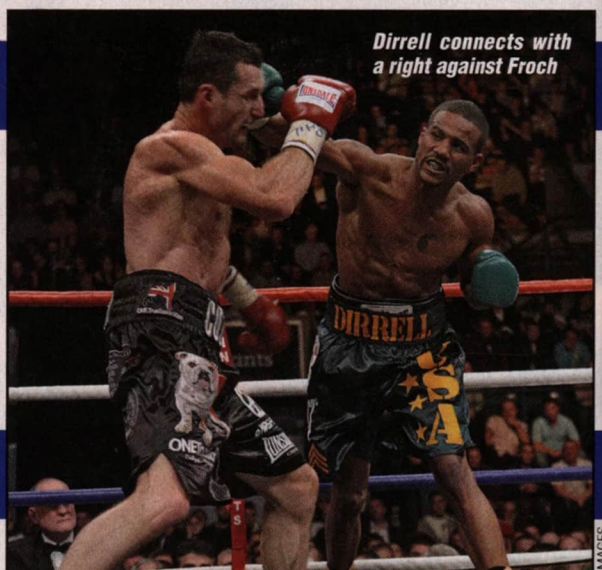
PHOTO BY BORIS STREUBEL/BONGARTS/GETTY IMAGES

66. DAVID HAYE Heavyweight 22-1 (21)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: By the time you read this, Haye will either have outboxed Nicolay Valuev and taken his over-sized novelty alphabet strap, or his marshmallow chin will have given way under one of the giant's gazebo-sized right hands. We suspect the former, but wouldn't be shocked at the latter. At any rate, Haye's venture into the land of the heavyweights certainly has spiced things up, and that includes his wild and wooly win over shopworn Monte Barrett (KO 5).
Future: If he's beaten Valuev, posturing for a fight with one of the Klitschkos will have begun, whether or not it's sincere. If he's lost, a return to cruiserweight isn't out of the question.

67. JOEL CASAMAYOR
Lightweight 36-4-1 (22)

Last Year's Ranking: 39
Status Report: After 14 months off, Casamayor will finally have entered the ring again by the time you read this, reportedly against 16-fight novice Jason Davis in November in Las Vegas. It will have been his first effort since Juan Manuel Marquez stopped him in September '08. The demotion he's taken this year could have been worse. But this old Cuban is a heck of a fighter, always has been, and he gets the benefit of the doubt.
Future: There aren't a lot of opportunities out there for 38-year-old counter-punchers with a bad attitude. And, he's a lefty, for cripes sake.



Dirrell connects with a right against Froch

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

68. ANDRE DIRRELL
Super Middleweight 18-1 (13)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: We doubt Dirrell's Facebook page was flooded with "friend" requests following his performance against Carl Froch in the first leg of the Super Six tournament, despite the perception, held by many, that he deserved the decision. He was fast, mobile, and exceedingly hard to hit. The bad news is he was fast, mobile, and exceedingly hard to hit. Maybe he deserved the win, but he stunk out the joint.
Future: Next opponent in the Super Six: Arthur Abraham. *Ouch!*

69. RAUL GARCIA IBF Strawweight Titleholder 27-0-1 (16)

Last Year's Ranking: 80
Status Report: Another good year for Garcia, who almost certainly will have beaten under-qualified Lorenzo Trejo by the time you read this. Wins over Jose Luis Varela in a rematch (W 12), Ronald Barrera (KO 6), and Sammy Gutierrez (W 12), alphabet title defenses each, solidify his standing among the better jockey-sized fighters.
Future: Is there a future for any 108-pound fighter? Sure, we'd like to see him face Roman Gonzalez, but why would either of them do it?

70. TAKEFUMI SAKATA
Flyweight 35-5-2 (16)

Last Year's Ranking: 44
Status Report: Sakata drops a long way after getting ousted in two rounds in his rematch with Denkaosan Kaovichit. Is this the same guy who beat Lorenzo Parra and Roberto Vasquez a couple years ago? To make matters worse he's been mostly irrelevant since, beating a pair of no-hopers in Jin-Man Jeon (W 12) and Decky Putra (KO 2).
Future: Sakata's 0-1-1 against Kaovichit. A third meeting would seem a reasonable direction to go in. A big-money match against Koki Komeda wouldn't hurt either.

Sakata is rocked by Kaowichit's left

PHOTO BY JIJI PRESS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

71. SERGIO **MARTINEZ** Junior Middleweight 44-1-2 (24)

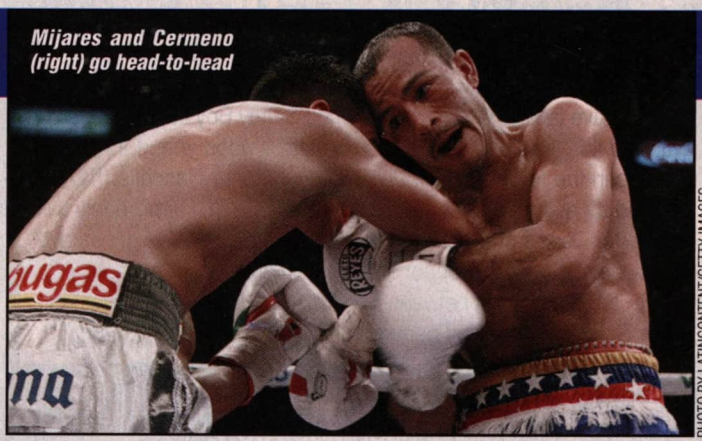
Last Year's Ranking: 75
Status Report: Martinez came out of nowhere—well, Spain actually, which is kind of like nowhere when it comes to boxing—to be a major player at 154. Unfortunately, he wasn't as active last year as many of us would have liked. His only appearance came in a horrendously scored draw against Kermit Cintron (D 12) for one of those lamentable alphabet "interim" titles. He clearly deserved the decision. Was still trying to get Vernon Forrest in the ring when Forrest was murdered.
Future: From all appearances, Martinez is too talented to be getting fat on his couch. He had nothing signed at press time and needs to get busy. At 34, he hasn't a lot of time to waste.

72. EDGAR **SOSA** WBC Light Flyweight Titleholder 37-5 (21)

Last Year's Ranking: 89
Status Report: By the time you read this, Sosa will have likely disposed of Rodel Mayol, who at this writing has had about 149 tries for a title without success. We doubt he'll turn the trick against Sosa, who had another excellent year, beating Juanito Rubella (KO 7), Pornsawan Porpramook (KO 4), Carlos Melo (KO 5), and Omar Soto (KO 6).
Future: If Sosa keeps banking a steady four defenses a year, he'll keep moving up this ranking. If he's beaten Mayol, that means he's three months away from another title defense. You can set your clock by this guy.

73. NEHOMAR **CERMENO** Bantamweight 18-0 (10)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: If you're scratching your head wondering who the hell Cermeno is, think "Cristian Mijares" and it will come to you. Yes, Cermeno is the guy who twice beat Mijares (W 12 twice) not long after most of us were calling Mijares one of the best in the world. You wouldn't be wrong if you said Vic Darchinyan softened him up, but for a 16-fight kid to twice beat a world-class guy in Mijares, well, that tells you something.
Future: Is one of 327 "interim" WBA bantamweight titleholders, so expect a fight against one of the other 326 some time over the next decade.


Mijares and Cermeno (right) go head-to-head
PHOTO BY LATINCONTENT/GETTY IMAGES

74. MICHAEL **KATSIDIS** Lightweight 26-2 (21)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Everyone's favorite Gatti-lite du jour rebounded superbly from back-to-back losses to Joel Casamayor and Juan Diaz in '08 to beat Angel Ramirez (W 10), former titleholder Jesus Chavez (KO 8), and the Nacho Beristain-trained Vicente Escobedo (W 12). Against Escobedo especially, Katsidis showed off a much-improved defense, which means he only walked into every *third* punch.
Future: Katsidis is everything the cable networks want in a puncher (determined, strong) and everything skilled, top-level guys want in an opponent (easy to hit, a bleeder). He will never go hungry or want for work.

Katsidis walked through Escobedo's best punches
PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

75. STEVEN **LUEVANO** Featherweight 37-1-1 (15)

Last Year's Ranking: 77
Status Report: After a very busy '08, Lueveno fought just once in '09, a disappointing disqualification win over the apparently hearing-impaired Bernabe Concepcion (DQ 7), who dropped Luevano about a week and a half after the bell. This enraged Freddie Roach to no end, but Lueveno got the win, as he should have. Luevano's a good, skilled fighter who stands and punches more than he has to and doesn't really have the chin to get away with it. That's why he's fun.
Future: Sadly, had nothing scheduled as went to press. For the second best 126-pounder in the world, this is simply unacceptable.

76. YURIORKIS GAMBOA WBA Featherweight Titleholder 16-0 (14)

Last year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Fans of the mercurial Cuban will grouse about his low placement, especially in view of his win over, ahem, Whyber Garcia (KO 4) in October for one version or another of one of the WBA's ubiquitous trinkets and straps. Oh well. Yes, placement here is largely about potential and talent, but we should have the guy beat *someone* before we anoint him the next Willie Pep, shouldn't we? Criminy.
Future: Scheduled to face Bernabe Concepcion in January in Puerto Rico. Our advice: When the round ends, duck.

77. SERGEI DZINZIRUK Junior Middleweight 36-0 (22)

Last year's Ranking: 67
Status Report: Yet another good, skilled boxer who apparently is willing to fight only on leap years. Dzinziruk showed up for work all of one time since last year's analysis and we'll boot a lot of guys off this list for such a lousy attendance record. So why is Dizzy still here? He boxed the ears off Joel Julio (W 12) in November '08 and while we'll admit that the bloom is pretty much off that rose, it's good enough to get Dzinziruk one more year. But this is the last time.
Future: We see a lot of couch time and skiing and maybe some video gaming or some such play interrupted briefly with a fight of little or no consequence against a fighter of little or no merit. We're only going on recent history.

78. GIOVANNI SEGURA WBA Light Flyweight Titleholder 21-1-1 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: He wasn't the busiest guy on the block, but Segura, who will have faced the splendidly named Sonny Boy Jaro by the time you read this, had by most standards a very good year. First came revenge in the form of a rematch win over Cesar Canchila (KO 4), followed by a stoppage of Juanito Rubillar (KO 6). He probably will have given Jaro a shellacking too, and these days, three good kayo wins against three good opponents is, well, pretty darn good.
Future: Wouldn't a fight between Segura, the division's best hitter, and Ulises Solis, a pretty good banger in his own right, be tons of fun?

PHOTO BY TORSTEN SILZ/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Sturm (left) withstood a strong challenge from Gevor

79. FELIX STURM WBA Middleweight Titleholder 33-2-1 (14)

Last Year's Ranking: 71
Status Report: Why does it seem like Sturm is never doing anything worthwhile and then you look and find out he's been beating some of his division's highest-rated contenders? Say what you want about him ducking a fight with, well, everyone, since last year's analysis, Sturm has beaten Khoren Gevor (W 12), at this writing THE RING's number-four ranked middleweight, and Sebastian Sylvester, our number-two guy (W 12). What more could you ask for? Well, a lot really, but let's not get crazy. This is Felix Sturm we're talking about.
Future: Possibly a fight with Anthony Mundine, which could be interesting.

PHOTO BY FRANCOIS NASCIMBENI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Cruz beats Thomas to the punch

80. CRISTOBAL CRUZ IBF Featherweight Titleholder 39-11-1 (23)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Don't be thrown by the Mexican's double-digit losses. Cruz can fight, as he showed against Orlando Salido (W 12), Cyril Thomas (W 12), and Jorge Solis (W 12). He will likely have beaten Ricardo Castillo in Mexico by the time you read this, and even if he hasn't, don't think he's going anywhere. To a guy with 11 losses, one more isn't the end of the world. You just get back in line.
Future: Probably an alphabet title defense against Fernando Beltran Jr.

76 YURIORKIS GAMBOA

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

81. LIBRADO ANDRADE Super Middleweight 28-2 (21)

Last Year's Ranking: 94
Status Report: By the time you read this, you'll know if Andrade's ridiculous chin proved too much for Lucian Bute to handle in their rematch. Even if Bute found a way to get through the last round this time without a referee's kind assistance, Andrade remains one of the toughest hombres in the game's upper-mid echelon, if one of its less-skilled inhabitants. A great chin goes a long way. We'll see how far it takes Andrade.
Future: If he beats Bute, expect either a rubber match or some keep-busy mandatory defenses until the conclusion of the Super Six tournament. Still, a loss doesn't send Andrade packing. He's too stubborn.

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Cintron and Martinez mix it up

82. KERMIT CINTRON Junior Middleweight 32-2-1 (28)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Give Cintron credit. After embarrassing himself against Sergio Martinez (D 12), he came back to beat likable prospect Alfredo Angulo (W 10) and then Juliano Ramos in a keep-busy fight in Puerto Rico. Here's the problem: Angulo can fight, but he was not a contender when Cintron beat him, even by today's loose standards. We should expect Cintron to beat him. Still, Cintron gets kudos for the likely possibility that Antonio Margarito's wraps were loaded when he twice beat Cintron senseless.
Future: Something's wrong when Angulo is right back on ESPN and HBO, while Cintron has to go to Puerto Rico in an off-TV fight. Who wouldn't want to see Cintron on HBO again against, say, Verno Phillips?

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Jones cruises past Lacy

83. ROY JONES Light Heavyweight 54-5 (40)

Last Year's Ranking: 59
Status Report: Jones' supporters, whose numbers remain large, will be aghast at this ranking, but it is fair. Not just because the one-time King was annihilated by Joe Calzaghe in November '08 (L 12), but too, because his activity since has been negligible. If you want to argue as to the high merit of Omar Sheika (KO 5) and Jeff Lacy (KO 10), well, have at it. We'll be over here debating with a grapefruit. It'll be more stimulating.
Future: A match with Danny Green in Australia, and then, unless it implodes first, a rematch with Bernard Hopkins. But don't believe it until they're in the ring together. And maybe not even then.

84. SAKIO BIKA Super Middleweight 28-3-2 (19)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Unless Bika has been stricken with typhoid fever or gigantism or some similar malady, it is nearly unconscionable that he has fought just three times since winning *The Contender* reality series competition in 2007. So much for momentum. Two wins in the last year, over *Contender* alum Peter Manfredo (KO 3) and Nestor Casanova (KO 1) would be fine if nothing else was happening (hence his appearance here). But a golden opportunity has been carelessly squandered.
Future: Nothing's scheduled at press time, despite the quality of the many good fighters in the division in which Bika participates. Terrible.

85. SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER IBF Middleweight Titleholder 32-3 (15)

Last Year's Ranking: 73
Status Report: Sylvester drops several notches mostly on the basis of his pitiable loss to Felix Sturm in November '08. How bad is it when you lose to Felix Sturm by a combined 26 points? Pretty damned bad. Still, Sylvester hangs on by virtue of subsequent wins over Gaetano Nespro (KO 7), Lajuan Simon (W 12), and Giovanni Lorenzo (W 12). Hey, it's something.
Future: Sooner or later, a meeting with Roman Karmazin or Anthony Mundine.

86. EDDIE CHAMBERS Heavyweight 35-1 (18)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Chambers put together three good wins in the last year, outpointing journeyman Cisse Salif (W 8), Sam Peter (W 10), and Alexander Dimitrenko (W 12). It is the latter two that have some optimists going gaga over him, especially the win over Dimitrenko, who, the thinking goes, is large and Eastern European and, therefore, the same as the Brothers Klitschko. Chambers has fast hands, good skills and, despite his puzzling loss to Alexander Povetkin in '08—he won the early rounds then just stopped fighting—the right attitude.
Future: Chambers is the mandatory challenger for Wladimir Klitschko. What's that about being careful what you wish for?

Urango came off the floor to stop Bailey
PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

87. JUAN URANGO
IBF Junior Welterweight Titleholder 22-2-1 (17)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Urango has lost when he's stepped up, but there's no shame in losing to Ricky Hatton (L 12) and Andre Berto (L 12), especially when the Berto loss came at welterweight rather than at 140. And aside from the loss to Berto, Urango had an excellent year, beating tricky Herman Ngoudjo in Quebec (W 12) and then getting off the floor to beat hard-punching, soft-chinned Randall Bailey into sweet submission (KO 11).
Future: Nothing scheduled as we went to press, but an alphabet title defense against Kendall Holt or Zab Judah is a possibility.

88. WLADIMIR SIDORENKO Bantamweight 21-2-2 (7)

Last Year's Ranking: 87
Status Report: It was tempting to keep Sidorenko in the same position he occupied last year. After all, his only mistake since then was to lose a close fight—again—to Anselmo Moreno (L 12). The problem is that's all he did. No other fights besides that one, which took place in May and was for the WBA strap (what else?) that Moreno had taken from Sidorenko the previous May. Sidorenko had a ton of title defenses before he lost to Moreno, but Wlad: what have you done for us lately?
Future: How the hell does Sidorenko, from the Ukraine but a German citizen, keep losing close decisions in Germany? Our advice: Go on the road.

89. ALI FUNEKA
Lightweight 30-2-2 (25)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Funeka acquitted himself very well in his only two fights of importance: a stoppage of Zahir Raheem in July '08 (KO 4) and a close loss to Nate Campbell in February '09 in Florida (L 12). Funeka surprised many observers with the hard time he gave a resurgent Campbell, even if the so-called "Galaxy Warrior" failed to make weight. Funeka can fight.
Future: With an alphabet title at stake, will have faced Joan Guzman in Quebec by the time you read this.

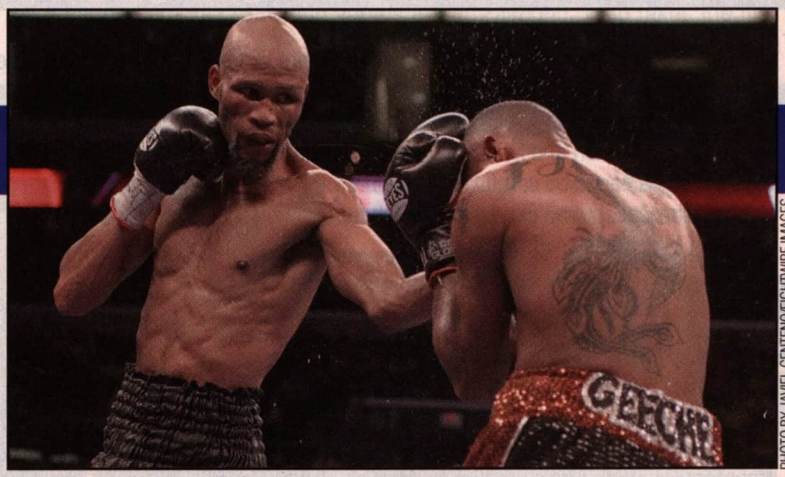


PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES
Funeka gained ground losing close to Campbell

90. CARLOS QUINTANA Welterweight 26-2 (20)

Last Year's Ranking: 55
Status Report: Quintana drops a long way, primarily due to inactivity. Since his stunning kayo loss to Paul Williams in their rematch in June '08, he has fought just once, an inconsequential win over sub-500 Joshua Onyango in Puerto Rico. Quintana is still one of the better stylists in the division but appears to lack the stuff to take on the best of the lot at 147.
Future: Might not fight again in 2009, due to the latest postponement of the Pavlik-Williams fight, where Quintana was scheduled to fight Joshua Clottey on the undercard.

91. OMAR NINO
Junior Flyweight 28-3-1 (11) with 1 no-contest

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Welcome back to the soap opera that is Omar Nino's boxing career. To bring you up to speed, he upset Brian Viloria in 2006. Then, after the rematch, he failed a drug test (that's where the no-contest comes from). He took off two years, came back and lost a close nod to Juanito Rubillar (L 12). He's won three straight since, the most recent a revenge win over the very same Rubillar (Tech. Win 8)
Future: The best possible fight for Nino: a third meeting with Viloria, scheduled for December 5 in the Philippines.

PHOTO BY CHRIS COZZONE/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Nino and Viloria trade shots

92. DANIEL SANTOS Junior Middleweight 32-3-1 (23)

Last Year's Ranking: 69
Status Report: You would think a guy, who has a pair of wins over Antonio Margarito on his resume and has also beaten Antonio Rivera, Joachim Alcine, and a few other decent guys, would, oh, we don't know, want to fight once in a while. Not Santos. And it's a shame, because the guy can fight. Sometimes a boxer, sometimes a puncher, usually a winner, but lately a slacker. The only reason he made the list appears below.
Future: An important, but almost certainly dull fight with undefeated Yuri Foreman that will have come off by the time you read this.

93. KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK Cruiserweight 41-2-1 (31)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: It's a good thing Wlodarczyk drew with WBC strap clinger Giacobbe Fragomeni in May or he wouldn't have gotten within driving distance of this list. As it is, consider their fight took place in Italy: Fragomeni was down in the ninth and the verdict was a draw. What does that tell you about who really won? Wlodarczyk—if that is his real name—can't be all bad.
Future: Wlodarczyk split a pair of bouts with Steve Cunningham a while back. How about a third meeting to settle things?

94. ROLANDO REYES Lightweight 31-4-2 (20)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Up until recently, Reyes was more or less that guy who stepped up a little and got smacked back down to where he belonged. In losses to Jose Luis Castillo (L 12) and Miguel Huerta (L 10), he couldn't handle it. But wins over the last couple of years against one-time lightweight titleholder Stevie Johnston (KO 10) and then, in April against Julio Diaz (KO 5), Reyes showed he could step up—even if Johnston and Diaz had seen better days.
Future: Reyes has to be careful; he's no Juan Manuel Marquez, but he can fight. How about a go with Michael Katsidis?

95. KENDALL HOLT
Junior Welterweight 25-3 (13)

Last Year's Ranking: 97
Status Report: Holt moves up a couple notches from last year, and you can make a strong argument for rating him even higher. After all, he lost a very competitive fight (L 12) with Tim Bradley, who landed at 30. He also beat a surprisingly frozen Demetrius Hopkins (W 12), which surprised many. The catch is he hasn't fought since losing to Bradley, and at this writing, has nothing signed that we're aware of.
Future: A natural is a third meeting with Colombian puncher Ricardo Torres, with whom Holt split a pair of shootouts.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Holt hands Hopkins his first loss

96. ISAAC HLATSWAYO
IBF Welterweight Titleholder 29-1-1 (10)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: For a moderately talented guy like Hlatswayo, it's hard to ask for a better year. He drew with Delvin Rodriguez when the two met in South Africa last November for an alphabet strap, and then won the rematch in Connecticut in August (W 12). If it seems like Hlatswayo's been around forever, it's because he has, and he's beaten some good guys along the way—Nate Campbell, Philip N'Dou, and Cassius Baloyi to name three.
Future: If Hlatshwayo's content to feast on IBF mandatories, he'll do all right. But he'll have trouble against any of the top six or seven guys in this class.

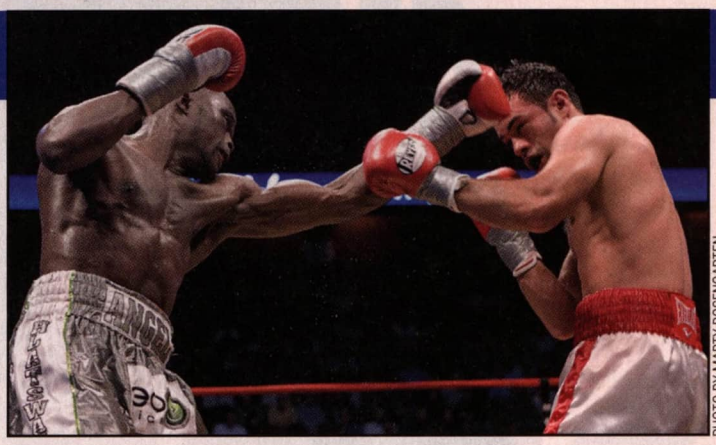


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Hlatswayo jabs Rodriguez in rematch

97. VERNO PHILLIPS Junior Middleweight 42-11-1 (21)

Last Year's Ranking: 41
Status Report: Like others in this analysis, Phillips takes a precipitous tumble down the rankings due mainly to inactivity after a loss. He hasn't fought since Paul Williams beat the bejesus out of him (KO 8) in November '08 in California. The loss itself isn't a huge deal; many guys better than Phillips will lose to Williams down the line. But you can't win if you don't fight, even if you're a tough-as-balls, old-school fighter like Phillips.
Future: Phillips will turn 40 just before this issue goes on sale, and he's no Bernard Hopkins. You figure it out.

98. TAVORIS CLOUD IBF Light Heavyweight Titleholder 20-0 (18)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Chad Dawson was roundly criticized when it appeared he was going to face Cloud in a mandatory. He shouldn't have been; he almost certainly would have won, but as Cloud showed against Julio Cesar Gonzalez (KO 10) and Clinton Woods (W 12), he can fight. He throws every punch hard, he's got reasonable technique and he is hungry with a capital H. If he can shore up his defense he will be tough to beat.
Future: Nothing signed as of press time, but here's the fight to make at 175: Cloud versus Adrian Diaconu. Who takes the first backward step?

99. JORGE SOLIS Featherweight 37-2-2 (27)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: A year that started off promising for Solis with a win over Monty Meza Clay (KO 5) ended up something else when Solis was roughed up and decisioned by Cristobal Cruz in September in a meeting for an alphabet trinket. The good news is it was Solis' first loss since Manny Pacquiao stopped him in Texas in 2007, after which Solis put together a nifty four-fight win streak.
Future: Solis shouldn't want any part of Cruz again, but how about Steven Lueveno?

100. ROGERS MTAGWA
Junior Featherweight 26-13-2 (18)

Last Year's Ranking: Unranked
Status Report: Mtagwa probably has the worst record of anyone to appear on this list ever, but if you saw the hell he gave the very good Juan Manuel Lopez in October, you know why he's here. While we wouldn't necessarily agree with those who say he deserved the decision, he came very close to stopping a guy we place at number 29 in a scintillating fight. How could we ignore him?
Future: Not good. There's no way he gets the rematch he (and his fans) are asking for, and after seeing what he did against Lopez, managers will steer their prospects around him.

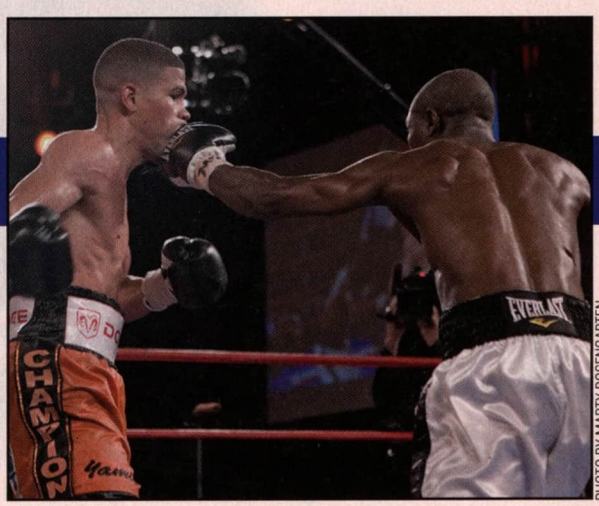


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Mtagwa comes on strong down the stretch

HALL OF FAMER

YOUNG STRIBLING

A Daredevil Everywhere Except Inside The Ring

By Don Stradley

Young Stribling was 28 when he mounted his motorcycle for the last time, on October 1, 1933. After a morning spent golfing at the Idle Hour Country Club, Stribling was on his way to a Macon, Georgia, hospital where his wife Clara was recuperating; she'd recently given birth to their third child, a boy named Guerry Boone.

Stribling's speed would later be reported at 35 MPH, which wasn't fast for him. Although he'd been a cautious fighter—after more than a decade of boxing, his face was as smooth and unmarked as a church statue—outside the ring he was a thrill seeker. He flew with a Miami air-racing club; he raced motorcycles and speedboats; he'd tear down country roads in his Cord sedan. Two years earlier, a blinding storm over Texas had forced an emergency landing of his plane. The wings were torn off and his passengers were shaken, but he'd walked away from his downed craft as if it was just another day in the life of daredevil Strib, a fellow who not only epitomized southern charm and swagger, but looked the way movie stars looked in those days, square jawed and rugged. Add to this his inclination to swerve in and out of traffic to taunt the local police, and you had a certified local legend.

No one knew the exact number of fights he'd had, some guessed 300 or so, for he'd fought wherever Ma and Pa Stribling could set up a ring and sell tickets, from Meridian, Mississippi to Salt Lake City, Utah. All of those

battles made him feel like a very old 28. Retiring to pursue a flying career was a possibility. Experienced pilots he'd flown with thought he had the potential to be a brilliant flyer. But on this October day, before any decision about his future could be made, an automobile driven by a motorist named R.V. Johnson sideswiped Stribling.

The damage to Stribling was catastrophic. Along with internal injuries, his pelvis had been crushed, and his left foot was nearly sheered off at the ankle. Taken to the same hospital where his son had been born, Stribling joked, "I guess this means no more roadwork." Two days later, he was pronounced dead.

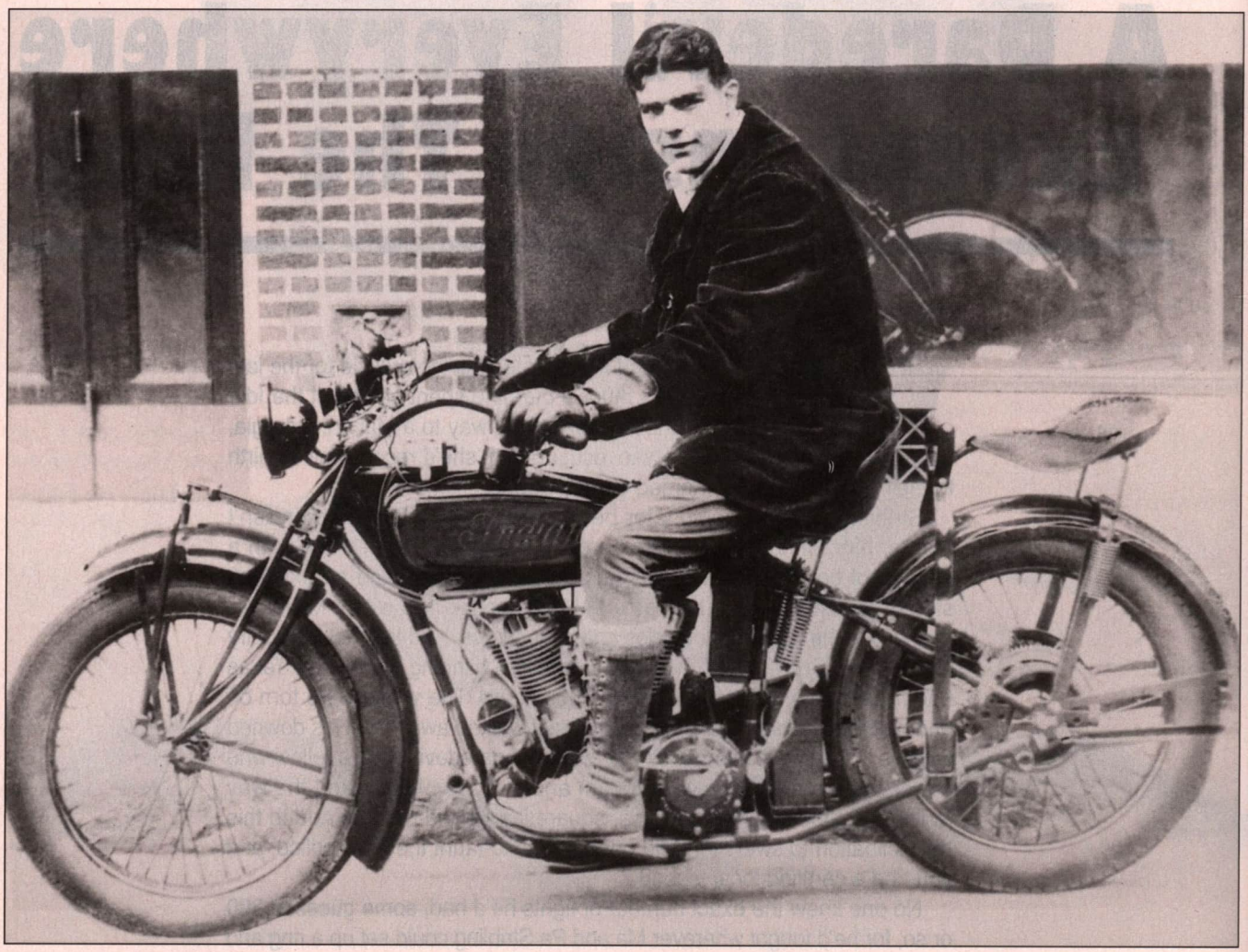
Family members alive today have only vague knowledge of Stribling. They know he was once hailed as one of Georgia's top sports figures, and that he'd played basketball in high school and was a lieutenant in the Air Force reserves. They know about the fun stuff, like the "Buckshot Punch," where Stribling would fake a right before landing it. They know about the Macon landmarks named after him, and that Pa had burned through the money Stribling earned, and was even sued by Stribling's widow.

Von Gilbert, a distant cousin, told THE RING that a rabbit skin coat given by Pa to a relative recently ended up in the hands of a niece. "I'm sure it's half moth-eaten, but she wanted it," said Gilbert. Tom Stribling, one of the fighter's grandsons, recalled, "I remember a teacher of mine telling me about sneaking out of the house and hitchhiking to Miami to see grandpa fight."

But the tidbits gleaned from yellowed newspaper clippings found in family Bibles don't tell the whole story, for the Stribling family wasn't likely to read papers from the northeast, where boxing writers pegged Stribling as a fighter who wilted under pressure, a kid who built a career on easy opponents handpicked by Pa. This attitude was typified by *The New York Times*' Julian Harris, who commented on the thousands of mourners at Stribling's funeral by writing, "That the body of this Georgia pugilist should lie in state, and that his fatal accident and quick death should be heralded in Georgia newspapers in headlines usually reserved for national tragedies, may seem incongruous when viewed from distant places." Then, in the tone used by New York writers throughout Stribling's career, Harris added, "The South loves its lost causes."

Similar remarks persisted long after Stribling had taken his last ride.

William Lawrence "Young" Stribling Jr. was born in Bainbridge, Georgia, on December 26, 1904. His parents, William and Lily Mae, were vaudeville entertainers. Along with William Jr. and



Stribling astride the Indian motorcycle he rode to his death in 1933. He was on his way to the Macon City hospital to visit his wife.

Although frequently criticized, especially by northern writers, for his cautious approach inside the ring, Stribling was a daredevil on the other side of the ropes, flying airplanes, racing speedboats, and driving like a maniac.

his younger brother Herbert ("Babe"), the family toured the country with a tumbling and juggling act known as The Four Novelty Grahams. The highlight of the act was when four-year-old Willie and two-year-old Babe put on gigantic boxing mitts and swatted each other. For the sake of showbiz, Stribling allowed Babe to win, but he enjoyed boxing. He turned professional as a bantamweight while still enrolled in Macon's Lanier High School, and had 70 bouts before his graduation. One of Stribling's early admirers was former heavyweight champion James J. Corbett, who told Grantland Rice that Stribling was "the best feinter I'd ever seen, bar none. He could feint anyone out of position."

The Striblings traveled in a Pullman bus large enough to carry sparring partners and a gymnasium's worth of boxing equipment. Pa, who'd wanted to be a fighter, worked as his son's manager. Pa was a hothead, known for swinging at referees, but when it came to his son, Pa was safety first, warning him during fights to be careful, careful, careful. Pa had no reason to worry. Damon Runyon had dubbed Stribling "The King of the Canebrakes," meaning Stribling's opponents were usually found among Georgia's underbelly of farmers and field workers.

When Stribling scored his record-setting 101st knockout, it was achieved against a fighter who'd had only one professional bout. Stribling's response to a reporter who accused him of only fighting second-raters was, "Yes, but I've never lost to one."

In October of 1923, light heavyweight champion Mike McTigue ventured into Columbus, Georgia, to face the Macon sensation. When referee Harry Ertle declared the bout a draw, bedlam broke

Ma and Pa Stribling were vaudeville performers who incorporated their sons, William Jr. and Babe, into their act. Pa managed his son's career by maximizing the ballyhoo and limiting the risk.

loose among Stribling's supporters. Ertle lost his nerve and raised Stribling's hand in victory, although he later claimed the bout's promoter had forced him to do it. When Ertle was a safe distance from the mob, he called reporters and reversed his decision to the original draw verdict.

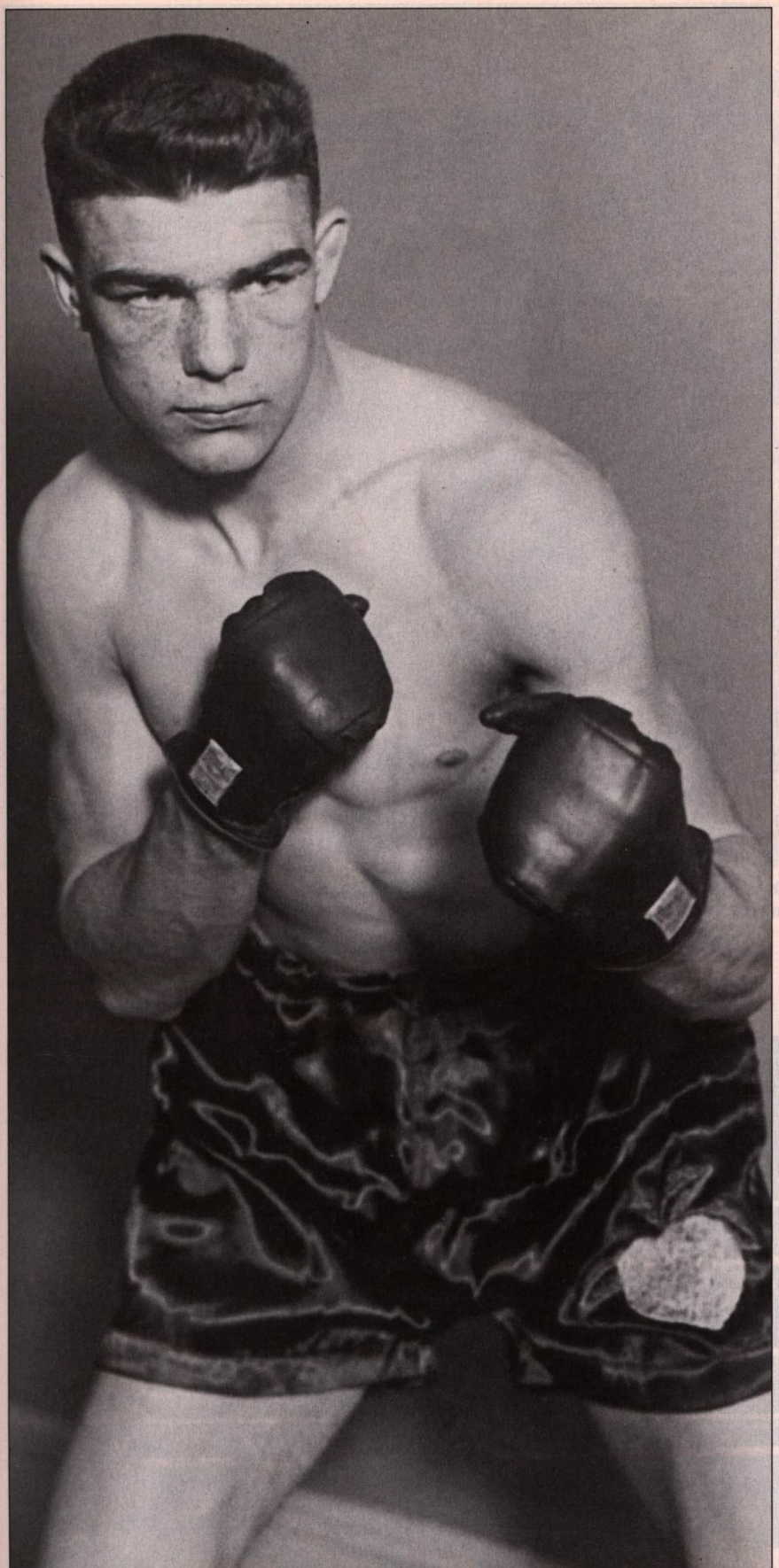
Eventually, a rumor grew that the turmoil had been created by members of the Ku Klux Klan. Some versions of the incident published decades later had Klan members in full regalia storming the ring, giving northern writers, most of whom were Jewish or Irish-Catholic, more reasons to dismiss Stribling. Pa didn't help matters with his alleged membership in The Supreme Kingdom, an anti-atheist organization founded by Klan members. Pa's exact affiliation was unclear, but at the very least, Pa was a duck-hunting buddy of the group's religious director, Dr. John Roach Stratton.

Tom Stribling felt the Klan stories were exaggerated. "I never heard anything about that," he told THE RING. He added with a chuckle, "That was the Deep South of 80 years ago, so nothing would surprise me."

Stribling would go on to win his share of bouts against some fine opponents, but along the way, Stribling developed a reputation for being too cautious, a clutch-and-run fighter. His losing effort to Paul Berlenbach at Yankee Stadium was described by Frank Menke as, "the most putrid exhibition ever displayed by any highly touted fighter in modern New York annals."

The way Stribling lost his 1929 bout with Jack Sharkey was archetypal. He hurt Sharkey early, knocked him bowlegged with a bodyshot, then he backed off and allowed Sharkey to win on points. Columnist Sparrow McCann referred to Stribling as "erratic ... a whirlwind when nothing of importance was at stake." Still, a string of 12 consecutive victories in 1930 kept Stribling's name alive. When a bout was made with new heavyweight champion Max Schmeling, Stribling was favored to win.

Pa created an extravagant training camp on the shores of Geauga Lake, Ohio, fitting the grounds with a Ferris wheel and roller coasters. There was even a clown who startled sportswriters



Young Stribling as he looked in 1924, during the build up to his second bout with light heavyweight champion Mike McTigue. Stribling had held McTigue to a draw in a controversial fight the year before, and got the better of the rematch, even though it was ruled a no-decision when neither man scored a knockout.

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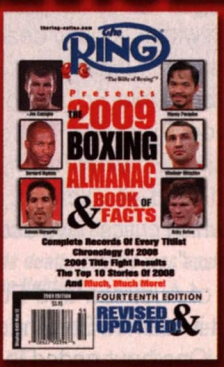

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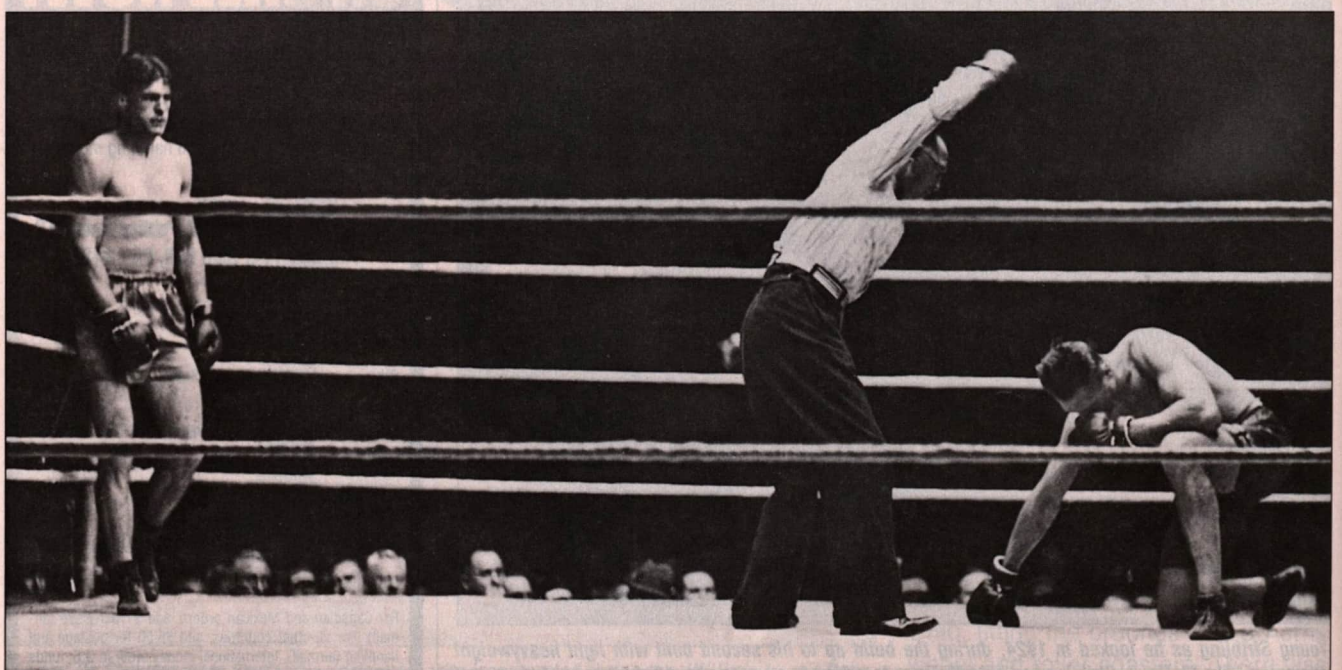
by throwing lit firecrackers at their feet. The spectacle peaked when Stribling borrowed a plane and flew directly over Schmeling's training headquarters. He swooped in close enough to wave at Max and his handlers. But despite the mobs of tourists who came to see Stribling spar, reporters still wondered about Stribling's craven reputation. Stribling responded: "Any man who has engaged in almost 300 fights in his career probably has looked badly at some time or other, so why all this talk about me being an in-and-outer?"

The 35,000 who'd filed into Cleveland's mammoth Municipal Stadium on July 7, 1931, saw Stribling fight brilliantly during the early rounds, only to be kayoed by Schmeling in the 15th. Typically, *The New York Times* called Stribling's title bid a "pitiful effort." THE RING's correspondent was more generous, writing that, "Stribling proved himself a man with a fighting heart."

Months later, Stribling took a dreadful beating from Ernie Schaaf, dropping a 10-round decision. *The Times* reported that in losing, Stribling fought "with exactly that kind of exciting, reckless courage which critics have accused him of lacking ... "

A tour of Australia and Europe followed, but it seemed Stribling was coming apart. One bout ended in a double disqualification, another saw him fined

Stribling took some time off while training to do a little quail hunting with his wife. After her husband's death, Clara Stribling sued her father-in-law for spending most of her husband's money.



Stribling watches referee Sam Russell count out British heavyweight hero Phil Scott in the second round of their 1930 bout in London, England.

Pa and Ma Stribling grieve at their son's flower-bedecked grave. Stribling's reputation has grown in the decades since his death, and he was enshrined in the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 1996, something many boxing writers would have thought inconceivable while he was fighting.

and suspended for fouling. The final bout of his career, just days before his death, was a 10-round decision win over Maxie Rosenbloom in Houston. Stribling could barely stand when it was over. He seemed to have passed his prime without ever realizing he was in it. The Associated Press reported his death by noting, "Stribling has left for the record books a question mark as to his true rating as a fighter."

"I don't think he enjoyed hurting people," Tom Stribling said. "He was a Christian, and he saw no point in pummeling someone until they were bleeding their guts out. I don't think he liked getting hit either. But in other aspects of his life he was balls to the wall. He passed that down; my father and I both had a love of fast cars—a need for speed." Tom's father, Guerry Boone, passed away in May 2009. There was no mention in his obituary that he'd been the son of Young Stribling. "The truth is," Tom said, "My grandfather's name doesn't come up very often. A lot of time has passed."

The passage of time helped in one regard. By 1985, when historian Herbert Goldman opined in THE RING that Stribling was one of boxing's greatest "almost champs," a statement that would have been chided a few decades earlier, it was as if the debate over Stribling had melted away. All that remained was an elephantine record estimated at 221-12-14, (127) with 36 no-decision bouts and 2 no-contests. Stribling's knockout total, inflated though it was, stood as the all-time record for two decades until it was surpassed by Archie Moore. His cautious style was now referred to as a slick, counter-punching style. Even a pair of fishy bouts with Primo Carnera was remembered fondly, as if the lithe Stribling actually went a-brawling with the gigantic Italian. The rebuilding of Stribling's image climaxed in 1996 when he was inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

"A whole bunch of us were there," Tom said. "That was quite a day."

But it couldn't have been any better than the afternoons in those American tank towns, when the old Pullman bus came rolling in, with Stribling's name on the side in big, bright letters. Those citizens of the solid South, perhaps seeing their first authentic prizefighter, couldn't have been any happier if Jack Dempsey himself had arrived. Whether the New York press appreciated him or not didn't matter, because to country folks untouched by the Roaring Twenties, Young Stribling brought glamour. To folks mired in the futility of The Depression, he brought grandeur.

There had to have been something special about him, because no one would hitchhike from Macon to Miami to see a lost cause. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

[Summary]

Heavyweights
Denis Boytsov KO 7 Jason Gavern
Tomasz Adamek KO 5 Andrew Golota
Sheldon Hinton KO 3 Andreas Sidon
Odlanier Solis KO 2 Monte Barrett
David Tua KO 2 Shane Cameron
Manuel Carr W 10 Sherman Williams
Colin Wilson KO 4 John Hopoate
Ran Nakash W 8 Gary Gomez
Audley Harrison KO 2 Scott Belshaw
Audley Harrison KO 2 Coleman Barrett
Audley Harrison W 3 Danny Hughes

Cruiserweights
Vassiliy Jirov KO 2 Jonathan Williams
Roman Golovashchenko W 12 George Tevdorashvili
Yoan Hernandez W 12 Enad Licina
Faisal Arrami KO 10 Charles Chisamba
Eric Molina W 10 Gabriel Holgun
Yago Kiladze W 10 Isroil Kurbanov

Light Heavyweights
Nathan Cleverly KO 8 Courtney Fry

Super Middleweights
Carl Froch W 12 Andre Dirrell
(Retains WBC Title)
Arthur Abraham KO 12 Jermain Taylor
Allan Green W 10 Tarvis Simms
Vilmos Balog W 12 Vasil Klyusa
Nikola Sjekloca W 12 Lorenzo Cosseddu
Roman Shkarupa W 10 Alessio Furlan
Khetag Kozaev KO 3 Jurijs Boreiko

Middleweights
Lajuan Simon W 12 Elvin Ayala
Sam Soliman KO 7 Les Piper
John Duddy W 8 Michi Munoz
Pawel Wolak KO 5 Carlos Nascimento
Dominik Britsch W 10 Michael Recloux
Ulises Lopez W 10 Jeferson Goncalo
Fernando Guerrero W 10 Ossie Duran
Sergio Sanders W 10 Matias Franco
Francis Cheka KO 9 Japhet Kaseba
Joel Julio W 6 Clarence Taylor

Junior Middleweights
Sherzod Husanov W 12 Timur Nergadze
Derek Ennis W 12 Eromosele Albert
Marcus Portman W 10 Tyan Booth
Antonin Decarie KO 10 Terrance Cauthen
Adriano Nicchi KO Cristiano Bonacci
Demetrius Andrade W 6 Chris Chatman

Welterweight Antwone Smith blasts Henry Crawford with left hook

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Welterweights

Vyacheslav Senchenko W 12 Motoki Sasaki
Alexey Evchenko KO 9 Bogdan Mitic
Antwone Smith KO 9 Henry Crawford
Antonio Pitalua KO 5 Wilfredo Negron
Adnan Amar KO 5 Tom Glover
Jamed Jalarante KO 4 Tsukasa Kashiwagi
Omar Chavez W 6 James Ventry

Junior Welterweights

Lance Gostelow W 12 Fatai Onikeke
Azad Azizov W 12 Charles Damas
Javier Castro W 12 Edgar Barcenas
Jonathan Barros W 10 Guillermo De Jesus Paz
Sergio Rivera W 10 Carlos Urias
Vladimir Kravets KO 4 Beka Sadjaia
Steven Wills KO 2 Sataporn Singwancha

Lightweights

Jason Pagara W 10 Decha Bankluaygym
Tsukasa Takase W 10 Yoshihiko Ikeda
Al Sabaupan W 10 Josafat Perez
Lee McAllister KO 7 Charlie King
Brandon Rios KO 7 Manuel Perez
Cesar Soto KO 6 Angel Reyna
Alisher Rahimov KO 5 Jahongir Abdullaev
John Murray KO 4 Jonathan Thaxton

Junior Lightweights

Juan Carlos Salgado KO 1 Jorge Linares
(Wins WBA Title)
Mario Santiago W 8 Morris Chule
Czar Amonsot W 10 Jesus Muzaka
Gilberto Bolanos W 10 Leonilo Miranda
Takashi Uchiyama KO 7 Aaron Melgarejo
Michael Sigarlaki KO 3 Julio De La Basez

Featherweights

Yuriorkis Gamboa KO 4 Whyber Garcia
(Retains WBA Title)
Israel Vazquez KO 9 Angel Priolo
Juan Burgos KO 6 Yogli Herrera
Satoshi Hosono W 12 Hiroyuki Enoki
Joksan Hernandez KO 9 Jorge Cardenas
Michael Farenas KO 9 Jae-Bong Jang
Rey Bautista KO 7 Marangin Marbun
Eduardo Lazcano KO 5 Lizandro De Los Santos
Domingo Vilpan KO 4 Cristian Palma
Oleg Yefimovych KO 3 Esham Pickering
Kris Hughes KO 1 Dai Davies
Ayup Arsaev KO 1 Georgi Kevlishvili

Junior Featherweights

Toshiaka Nishioka KO 3 Ivan Hernandez
(Retains WBC Title)
Juan Manuel Lopez W 12 Rogers Mtagwa
Ricardo Cordoba KO 10 Eddy Julio
Anselmo Moreno KO 6 Jorge Otero
Jason Booth KO 5 Michael Hunter
Tyson Cave W 10 Steve Cannell
Jorge Diaz KO 6 Yan Barthelemy
Robert Marroquin W 6 Jose Bernal

Bantamweights

Sahib Usarov W 12 Alexander Fedorov
Michael Domingo KO 8 Jose Navarro
Raul Martinez KO 5 Jonathan Perez

Junior Bantamweights

Kohei Kono W 12 Marvin Tampos
David Gaspar W 12 Jesus Vazquez
Marjun Yap KO 10 Pramuansak Posuwan
Drian Francisco KO 10 Roberto Vasquez
Myung Ho Lee W 10 Tomoyuki Masuyama

Flyweights

Denkaosan Kaowichit W 12 Daiki Kameda
(Retains WBA Title)
Wandee Singancha W 6 Joel Rafols
Nadia Raoui W 10 Fleis Djendji

Junior Flyweights

Pigmy Muangchaiyaphum W 12 Edwin Tumbaga
Milan Melindo W 10 Guadalupe Martinez
Nelson Llanos W 10 Julius Alcos
Warlito Parrenas KO 5 Roel Honor

Strawweights

Toshihiro Nakajima KO 1 Takuro Habu

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Junior featherweight Robert Marroquin slams a right into Jose Bernal

Chris John W 12 Rocky Juarez

Las Vegas, Nevada: Apparently Juarez didn't get the memo: The days of 15-round fights ended more than 20 years ago. Juarez, who showed up in green trunks and a funky new Mohawk hairdo, paced himself far too conservatively for a 12-rounder and lost his rematch with John at the MGM Grand Arena because he simply got going too late. He didn't begin fighting until the 10th round against the lanky John, and after escaping with a controversial draw in their first fight seven months earlier, Juarez lost this one clearly. With the win, the 30-year old John, 126, Jakarta, Indonesia, who wore a tribute to the late Arturo Gatti on the waistband of his trunks, secured his 11th defense of the WBA featherweight title.

If you saw one round, you saw them all through the first nine rounds: John, 43-0-2 (22), used his height and reach to create a comfortable distance, while Juarez, 28-5-1 (20), tried to get inside and each time tasted crisp jabs to the face. If there was one round that Juarez, 126, Houston, Texas, came close to winning, it was the fifth, when he picked up his pace, worked the body, and fought with a greater sense of urgency. Still, John did more and deserved to win the round.

John was masterful in using distance, knocking Juarez' head back with jabs. The few times Juarez, 29, was able to get inside, he did very little. In the eighth, John was bouncing on his toes and never giving Juarez a chance to set up. By the ninth, Rocky's face was beginning to swell, especially his left cheek.

Maybe that's what Juarez needed to wake him from his nine-round slumber, because he came alive in the 10th, sensing that this fight—his fifth alphabet title shot—was slipping away. Juarez won rounds 10, 11, and 12, and was rocking the Indonesian badly in the final stanza. But he ran out of time, needing the "championship rounds" of yesteryear to have a shot at victory.

Somehow judge Glen Hamada (USA) saw it razor close at 114-113 for John, but Adalaide Byrd (USA) had it 119-109 and

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

John comprehensively outpoints Juarez in rematch

Herb Santos (USA) called it 117-111, both for John. THE RING had John up 117-110. The referee was Joe Cortez (USA).

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**

Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**

(9-19-09)

Joseph Santoliquito

Michael Katsidis W 12 Vicente Escobedo

Las Vegas, Nevada: It just wouldn't be a Katsidis fight if the Toowoomba, Australia, warrior didn't spill some crimson somewhere. In his fight against Escobedo on the Floyd Mayweather-Juan Manuel Marquez undercard at the MGM Grand Arena, Katsidis wasted no time getting bloody, suffering a cut over the left eye in the first round. But to his credit, he ignored it and dominated Escobedo the rest of the way, putting on one of his finest performances en route to a split decision that to most observers should have been unanimous and wide.

Escobedo, 134, Woodland, California, tried using distance and pecking away from the outside against Katsidis, but the 2004 American Olympian couldn't keep the Aussie off. Katsidis, 135, just kept coming forward each time Escobedo tried establishing the jab, bulling his way inside and banging Escobedo to the body with looping rights.

By the third round, the cut over Katsidis' left eye appeared closed. Katsidis, 29, turned up the aggression, backing up the 27-year-old Escobedo, landing right uppercuts and also some jabs. Escobedo kept trying and frequently offered up flurries, only to have Katsidis catch most of the shots with his gloves.

With Katsidis dictating the pace and distance, Escobedo finally broke through in the seventh, winning his first round since the opener. He landed combinations and forced Katsidis to miss. But by the eighth, Katsidis was in charge again, coming forward and backing up Escobedo.

Escobedo had one more quality round after the seventh, winning the 11th by landing a good left hook to the head and keeping Katsidis at a safe distance. But Katsidis, 26-2 (21), closed the show, coming out for the 12th round as if he was trailing rather than ahead. He opened a cut along his opponent's right eye and relentlessly pursued the retreating Escobedo, 21-2 (13), until the final bell.

Somehow, the fight was scored a split decision. Judge Mike Fitzgerald (USA) must have been paying more attention to the shapely blondes at ringside than to the fight, as he scored it 116-112 for Escobedo. But judges Duane Ford (USA) and Robert Hoyle (USA) had the right guy winning, scoring 115-113

[THE RING Fighter of the Month]

Juan Carlos Salgado

One of the unfair aspects of boxing is the way the loser's story so often overshadows the winner's. When an undefeated, heavily hyped prospect like Jorge Linares loses in 73 seconds, especially after he'd just signed a contract with Golden Boy Promotions and was seemingly positioned to become one of their biggest stars, the reaction is inevitably "Can you believe Linares lost?!" And to a certain extent, that sweeps under the rug the guy who knocked Linares out.

But in the Fighter of the Month section of this magazine, we always give the winners their due, so let's spell it out: "The guy who knocked Linares out" is Juan Carlos Salgado, a 24-year-old fighter from Mexico City who just happens to be undefeated himself. He obviously can punch, and if you saw the way he pounced on Linares after knocking him down, you know he's a finisher.

"I still don't believe it. I never imagined it would happen so fast," Salgado said after the fight. Nobody did. In fact, hardly anyone thought it would happen at all, regardless of expedience. But it did, and it wasn't necessarily because Linares was a fraud. It might just be that the guy who *won* the fight is that good. He deserves recognition—and it starts with Fighter of the Month honors.

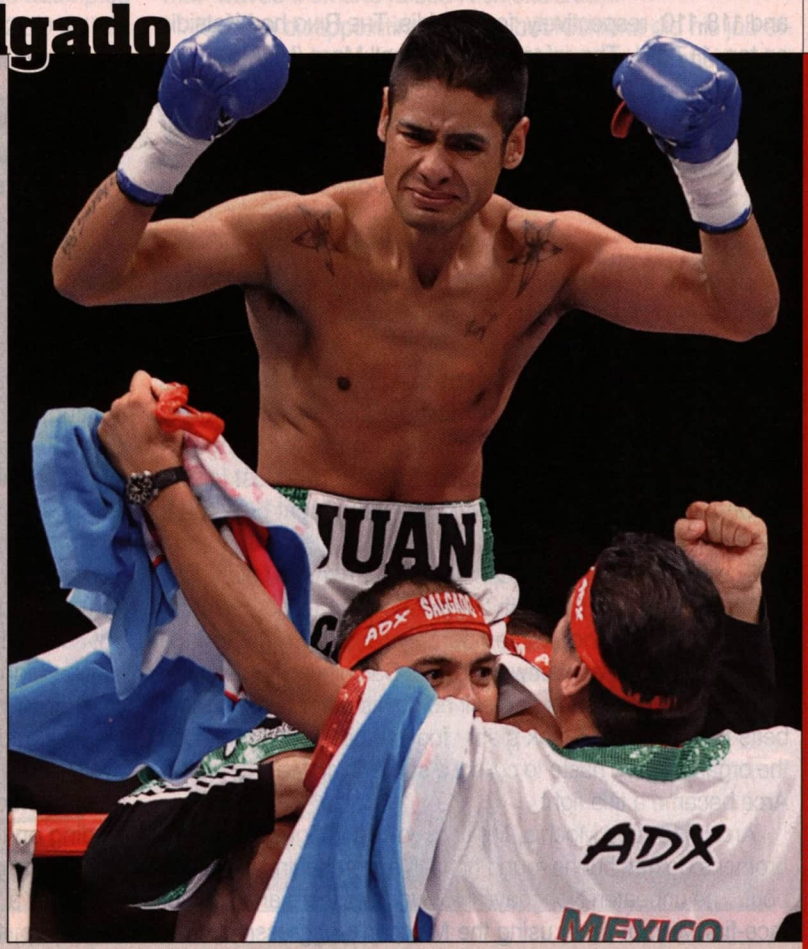


PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILER/GETTY IMAGES

Katsidis was too strong for Escobedo

and 118-110, respectively, for Katsidis. THE RING had Katsidis on top, 117-111. The referee was Russell Mora (USA).

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(9-19-09)
Joseph Santoliquito

Simphiwe Nongqayi W 12 Jorge Arce

Cancun, Mexico: South Africa's "Golden Master" Nongqayi's name doesn't exactly roll off the tongue, but it's a name that's known well in the Arce household, as Nongqayi followed up his February win over Francisco Arce with a wide points win over better-known brother Jorge at the Plaza de Toros. The fight was equal parts coming-out party for Nongqayi and invitation to gatekeeper status for Arce, who lost for the second time in three fights and looks like a spent bullet after nearly 60 pro fights.

The fight was for the vacant IBF junior bantamweight title, which was stripped from the previous man to defeat Arce, Vic Darchinyan, when he temporarily rose in weight to face Joseph Agbeko at bantamweight. That Darchinyan immediately returned to 115 pounds and still holds his other two alphabet belts makes the IBF look plenty foolish, but nevertheless, in the organization's haste to collect a sanctioning fee, Nongqayi-Arce became a title fight.

Arce, 115, Los Mochis, Mexico, vowed vengeance for his brother's defeat, but he found himself a step behind the entire bout. The unbeaten Nongqayi, 115, was too sharp and slick for face-first warrior Arce, using the Mexican's aggression to his advantage and countering the 30-year-old former 108-pound beltholder silly. Arce, 52-6-1 (40), never relaxed his effort, but effort alone wasn't enough with the way his abilities have been eroded by all of the bloody wars. And as if the in-ring action wasn't frustrating enough for the popular veteran, he also had to endure several delays due to rainwater leaking on the ring from an overhead canopy at the outdoor bullring.

The judges all saw the same fight, with Robert Gonzalez (USA) scoring 117-112, Alfredo Polanco (Mexico) 116-112, and Wally Snowball (South Africa) 117-111, all for Nongqayi, 16-0 (6). The referee was Jack Reiss (USA).

Promoter:
Promociones Zanfer
(9-15-09)

Juan Carlos Salgado KO 1 Jorge Linares

Tokyo, Japan: Unbeaten but unheralded Mexican Salgado, 130, shocked the boxing world when he needed just 73 seconds to TKO previously unbeaten WBA super feather titlist Linares, 129¾, a prohibitive favorite considered by many to be a future pound-for-pound entrant.

The underdog Salgado's first solid punch, a looping left hook, snuck around the titlist's guard, caught him flush, and sent him backward to the deck. Though Linares resumed fighting, he wasn't sturdy enough to thwart the aggressive Mexican challenger, and fell again in the corner due to a quick flurry of blows. Noting his shaky legs and glassy eyes, referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) wisely declared a halt.

No one had expected Linares' defeat, especially in such quick fashion. Though unbeaten, Salgado had not fought many well-known or experienced opponents in his five-year pro career. But now he has one very significant name on his resume.

The highly motivated Mexican youngster abruptly threw a left hook-right cross combination, the first punch catching Linares and the second missing the target. But one out of two was all he needed. Linares raised his right hand high to try to block the hook, but it penetrated his guard anyway, landing on the temple.

Many ringsiders at Yoyogi #2 Gymnasium thought Linares just took a flash knockdown, but when he barely pulled himself up, it became apparent that the damage was serious.

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Salgado stops Linares in stunning upset

As the ref ordered them to continue, Salgado, 24, rushed from the neutral corner to the dizzy beltholder and pinned him to the ropes with a flurry of punches. Linares attempted to avert them with his high guard, but Salgado, 22-0-1 (16), landed a solid right to the head followed by a right uppercut to the face. Linares' legs buckled and he went down again. He again managed to rise, but his equilibrium was gone.

Linares, 27-1 (18), never seemed to have a glass jaw before, as he proved he could take a punch in his tough fight with ex-title challenger Saohin Srithai Condo in 2006 and in the earlier rounds of his first title-winning bout with veteran Oscar Larios in 2007. But on this night he got caught cold, perhaps slightly unfocused for what was to be his last defense in Japan prior to his expected U.S. campaign under Golden Boy Promotions.

Linares' future blueprint may be that he will face conqueror Salgado in a rematch to regain his lost belt, and then move to the U.S. His planned encounters with Humberto Soto or Robert Guerrero are almost certainly off the table for now.

The crestfallen Linares, 24, said, "As I was knocked down, I lost my coolness. But I will regain my belt in a rematch with Salgado."

Promoter: **Teiken Promotions**

(10-10-09)

Joe Koizumi

Toshiaki Nishioka KO 3 Ivan Hernandez

Tokyo, Japan: There would be no shocking upset in the co-feature to Salgado-Linares at Yoyogi #2 Gymnasium. WBC super bantamweight titlist Nishioka, 121¾, kept his belt by breaking the jaw of Mexican challenger Hernandez, 122, with a vicious counter left, forcing him to retire at the end of the third session.

Nishioka, a 33-year-old Japanese left-hander, occasionally landed southpaw straight lefts to the solar plexus of Hernandez, 26, who attempted a whirlwind attack but barely landed anything. The titlist showed excellent defensive skills and countered with solid lefts to the body in the first round.

Midway through the second, a collision of heads produced a slight cut on the forehead of Hernandez, 25-4-1 (15). Referee Mike Griffin (Canada) took a point from the uncut Nishioka due to the WBC rules, making it an even round since Nishioka controlled the punching action.

The third round saw Nishioka, 35-4-3 (22), find his range and rhythm and begin to accurately catch the challenger with sharp lefts to the face and midsection. A smashing left landed on Hernandez' chin, and the Mexican immediately went into retreat.

After the third round was over, the fans expected that Nishioka's victory was only a matter of time. It turned out it wasn't a matter of much time at all. Hernandez refused to leave his corner, claiming that he had a broken jaw. The third man waved it off and raised Nishioka's arm.

It was a disappointing ending, but Nishioka did his job effectively. He showed improvement in both his offensive and

PHOTO BY KAZUHIRO NOGI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Nishioka (left) en route to TKO of Hernandez

defensive skills, suggesting that his impressive stoppage of Jhonny Gonzalez in Mexico in his previous fight wasn't a fluke.

"I wish to fight Rafael Martinez, Juan Manuel Lopez, or Celestino Caballero anytime and anywhere," Nishioka said. "By fighting strong rivals, I'll become stronger and prove I'm really strong."

Promoter: **Teiken Promotions**
(10-10-09)
Joe Koizumi

Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym KO 3 Bernard Dunne

Dublin, Ireland: He wasn't the opponent Dunne would have chosen for his first defense of the WBA super bantamweight title he had won so spectacularly from Ricardo Cordoba in March, but the organization ruled that Dunne must meet mandatory challenger Poonsawat or forfeit the belt. Back at the same O2 Arena where he enjoyed his greatest triumph, and buoyed by 8,500 fans screaming his name, Dunne was in command for the first two rounds—before his world fell apart.

Poonsawat, whose only previous trip abroad resulted in his sole loss, on a unanimous decision to Wladimir Sidorenko in Germany in 2006, had predicted: "Dunne has fast hands and he is very accurate, but his chin is suspect and I am looking forward to making the most of that."

He proved his point conclusively by bouncing the champion off the canvas three times before French referee Jean Louis Legland waved it over at 2:57 of the third. When he had recovered sufficiently to address his numbed supporters, a distraught Dunne said: "I knew what to expect from Poonsawat. I knew he would be aggressive early on, but I got lured into the fight and I shouldn't have. It's my own stupid fault."

Dunne, 121½, Dublin, Ireland, shouldn't blame himself. He was forced to trade with the relentlessly aggressive Poonsawat, 122, Sakon Nakhon, Thailand, and, like when he was blown away in 86 seconds by Kiko Martinez two years ago, he showed he simply lacks the resistance to powerpunches. Even when winning the WBA title from Cordoba, he had to climb off the floor twice and prove his great fighting heart by grinding down the Panamanian for an 11th-round stoppage. For his title defense, he had undergone a strenuous program of strength-building exercises with conditioning coach Mike McGurn, but, as has been shown throughout boxing history, no one has yet found a way to build muscles on chins.

The 28-year-old Poonsawat, who has never been floored in his 39-1 (28) career, proved he was made of tougher stuff than Cordoba. At 5'7", the Irishman was 3½ inches taller and enjoyed a corresponding reach advantage. His speed and superior boxing skill enabled him to take the opening round comfortably, but Poonsawat was finding his range in the next, even if the hometown favorite took the round. The Thai wasted no time in the third and completed his task in highly impressive style.

A sizzling left hook dropped Dunne, 29, for the first time, and two repeats from the same lethal weapon finished him off. Dunne, 28-2 (15), pointed out afterward that he had come back before from a heavy defeat and he could do so again. A move to featherweight, the division in which he began his career in the U.S. eight years ago, would be a possibility, said his manager, Brian Peters, but he would take time off before deciding on his future.

Poonsawat's manager, Niwat Laosuwannawat, who guided the great Khaosai Galaxy to the WBA super flyweight title and 19 successful defenses between 1984 and 1991, said Poonsawat could, in time, become as big a national hero as the Hall of Fame great.

Promoter: **Brian Peters**
(9-26-09)
Patrick Myler

Israel Vazquez KO 9 Angel Priolo

Los Angeles, California: The fact that Vazquez, 125½, Huntington Park, California, via Mexico City, Mexico, took part in yet another taxing brawl is no surprise. The unexpected part was that the taxing brawl came against Priolo, 124¾, Barranquilla, Colombia, a journeyman who had lost his previous six fights.

PHOTO BY CRAIG BENNETT/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Comebacking Vazquez overcomes cut to kayo Priolo

The 31-year-old Vazquez stepped into the ring for the first time in 19 months following surgery to repair a detached retina, which might help explain why he struggled against a fighter he was expected to handle easily. Or maybe the two-time former RING junior featherweight champion from Mexico is just worn out after so many wars, including his epic trilogy with Rafael Marquez. Either way, Vazquez and Priolo, 35, fought on fairly even terms through eight brutal rounds, after which two judges had the fight even and one had Vazquez leading by four points. Vazquez also suffered a gruesome cut above his left eye in the seventh round, which only added to the obvious concern of a pro-Vazquez crowd at Nokia Theater in downtown L.A.

Then the Israel Vazquez we know and love emerged out of nowhere to put an emphatic end to a difficult night. Vazquez knocked Priolo, 30-8 (20), down with a hard right about a minute into the ninth round, at which point it was the bleeding veteran warrior who smelled blood. He followed with two more knockdowns that prompted referee Pat Russell (USA) to stop the suddenly one-sided fight at 2:10 of the round. The fans on hand, who suffered with Vazquez for eight-plus rounds, erupted in cheers and chants of "Vaz-quez! Vaz-quez! Vaz-quez!"

Afterward, Vazquez acknowledged that he felt the ring rust but said he gained confidence as the fight progressed. And, in the end, he did what he lives to do: He lifted the fans from their seats with another dramatic knockout. "I proved I have enough to make more big fights," he said through a translator.

Vazquez and his handlers have one big fight in particular in mind: a fourth meeting sometime next year with Marquez, which they feel makes the most sense economically and competitively. They more or less acknowledged that another aging brawler with a little too much wear and tear would match up nicely with their man. "The right thing, the right fight more so than ever, is Vazquez-Marquez," said Richard Schaefer of Golden Boy Promotions.

Vazquez, 44-4 (32), might not be the fighter he once was, but he still knows how to put on a show. Rest assured that many fans will tune into Vazquez-Marquez IV. And they probably won't be disappointed.

Television: **Fox Sports Espanol**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions**
(10-10-09)
Michael Rosenthal

Nobuo Nashiro D 12 Hugo Cazares

Osaka, Japan: One of three WBA titleholders in the super flyweight division, Nashiro, 115, Japan, kept his version of the belt via split draw after a grueling 12-round fight with former RING 108-pound champion Cazares, 114, Mexico. Judge Wontak Yoon (Korea) scored it 116-112 for Nashiro, Albert Wilenski (USA) had it 116-112 for Cazares, and Philippe Verbeke (Belgium) saw it even at 114-114.

It was a seesaw affair for the first eight rounds, but Nashiro went forward and scored with solid straight rights down the stretch while Cazares looked to be fading. The partisan audience believed Nashiro deserved the victory, but Wilenski and Verbeke might have given weight to Cazares' greater volume of punches in the earlier rounds, even though Nashiro was more accurate.

PHOTO BY JIJI PRESS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Nashiro dominates late to retain junior bantam belt against Cazares

The short, sturdy Nashiro got off to a good start as he applied pressure to the circling Mexican switch-hitter and scored with solid rights and left hooks. Cazares, four years his senior at 31, turned loose in the second, throwing combinations while peek-a-boo stylist Nashiro landed one punch at a time.

The fourth was a difficult round to score, as Cazares, switching stances frequently, remained aggressive, but Nashiro came on later in the round and connected with strong shots. The fifth round was not at all difficult to score, as Nashiro landed stinging lefts and strong left-right combinations upstairs and downstairs that had Cazares backpedaling.

In round six, the Mexican switched to a southpaw stance and threw good uppercuts. Nashiro, however, used sharp jabs to bounce his head back and landed some solid blows. It was another round in which an argument could be made for scoring it either way. Cazares was in command in the seventh and eighth, dictating the tone of the fight with his aggression.

The tide almost turned in the ninth, when Cazares began to show fatigue, possibly due in part to draining himself to make weight and then gaining no less than 15 pounds after the weigh-in. He visibly became slower and less pugnacious, while Nashiro released solid jabs and left-right combos. Cazares, however, showed his gameness in trying to take back the initiative in the 10th.

Known for his abundant stamina, Nashiro began to surge in round 11. He scored with outstanding bodyshots, further slowing the challenger down. In the last session, the Japanese fighter accelerated his attack and hurt the apparently fading Mexican. Nashiro unleashed a very strong right that sent Cazares reeling; the ropes preventing him from hitting the canvas.

Nashiro, 13-1-1 (8), went all out for the finish, but Cazares, 30-6-2 (22), showed heart and lasted through the round.

THE RING saw Nashiro a 115-113 winner, but the scoring of the fight largely came down to how you evaluated Cazares' early-rounds aggressiveness. The referee was Hubert Earle (Canada), who handled the non-stop, scrappy contest very well.

Promoters: **Mutoh Promotions, Teiken Promotions**
(9-30-09)
Joe Koizumi

Edgar Sosa KO 6 Omar Soto

Puebla, Mexico: Unless he gets a unification fight against Ivan Calderon, Sosa isn't going to earn recognition from many fans as the best junior flyweight in the world. But when it comes to beating second-tier 108-pounders easily and often, the 30-year-old Mexican is without peer. Taking on the ordinary Soto, a Puerto Rican fighter with three losses among his previous six fights, Sosa reached double digits in defenses, registering his 10th since upsetting Brian Viloria for the vacant WBC title in April '07.

For whatever it's worth, Sosa, 107¾, Mexico City, looked sensational against the overmatched Soto, 106¾, Guaynabo, Puerto Rico. In front of a partisan crowd at the Auditorio Siglo XXI, the 30-year-old beltholder stalked the elusive challenger from the start, and by the fourth round, he was cutting off the ring and landing cleanly to Soto's midsection.

Late in round five, Sosa scored with a barrage of blows to the body and head, putting Soto, 27, in full-on retreat mode. In the sixth, Sosa trapped Soto, 14-4-1 (6), in a corner, just missed with a left hand, and then connected with a vicious straight right, crumpling the challenger along the ropes. Referee Vic Drakulich (USA) quickly stepped in and waved off the fight without need for a count at the 2:30 mark.

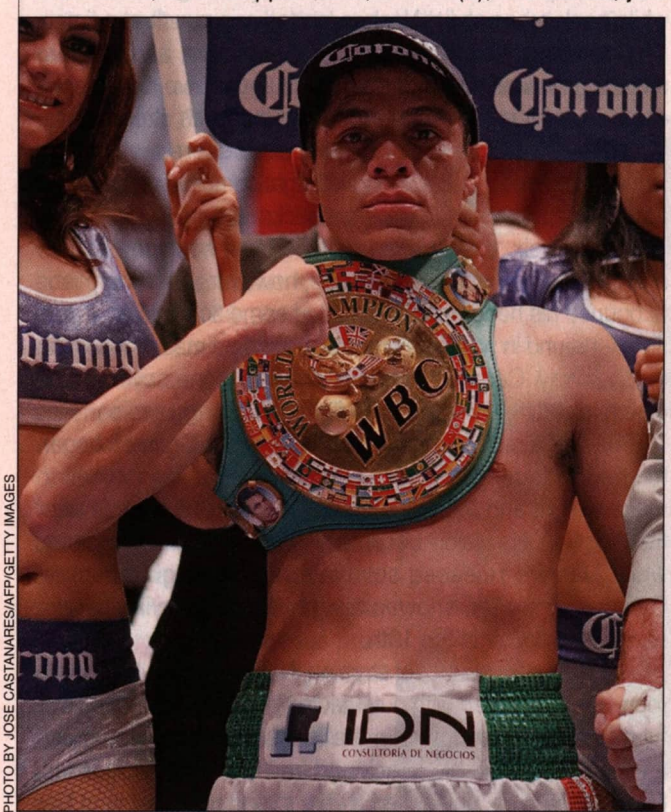


PHOTO BY JOSE CASTANARES/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Sosa stops Soto for 10th defense of WBC strap

As of press time, Sosa was scheduled for another quick turnaround, with recent Calderon rival Rodel Mayol lined up for a November defense.

Promoter: **Boxeo de Gala**
(9-15-09)

Jean Pascal KO 10 Silvio Branco

Montreal, Quebec: Athletically gifted, Montreal's Pascal, 173¼, was able to dominate Lazio, Italy's Branco, 174¼, with hair-trigger speed and fluid movement, but the lanky Italian remained game when not indulging in overly dramatic complaints about rabbit punching and low blows. Branco was originally supposed to meet another Montreal-based fighter, Adrian Diaconu, for the WBC light heavyweight belt in a fight that was twice postponed, but ultimately it was Pascal, after unseating Diaconu in a thriller last June, who returned to the city's Bell Centre to fulfill the mandatory. At 43 years old, Branco, a former holder of the WBA light heavyweight strap who had only once fought outside of Europe, may have been highly seasoned, but the 26-year-old Pascal's skills simply proved too formidable.

At 5'11", the brash Pascal looked outsized against the 6'1" Branco, who boxed effectively at long range with a steady jab followed up by an occasional right hand. The conventional attack was enough to garner Branco the first stanza as Pascal circled cautiously on the outside. By the second, however, Pascal was growing more adept at measuring the distance and began scoring with whistling right leads and selectively rushing in behind rapid-fire combinations. In close, Branco increasingly sampled Pascal's power and speed, where he seemed to sense he would be unable to keep pace over the distance.

As a result, round four saw the beginning of the theatrics from Branco, who, near the round's end, weathered a number of big combinations from Pascal along the ropes before toppling to the canvas. The Italian rolled over several times before rising and clutching the back of his head, but referee Gerry Bolen (Canada) still declared a knockdown, administering the standing eight and then sending the fighters to their respective corners at the bell.

Branco's display in the fourth may have been a cheap effort to garner additional points, but he fought effectively enough from the outside to earn the fifth round. But Pascal began to attack in earnest in round six, driving Branco back with powerful overhand rights and left hooks, and dropping him once again at the end of the seventh for an eight-count, as more complaints were issued by Branco and his corner over punches to the back of the head.

Fighting with the most aggression he had displayed all evening, a confident Pascal easily took round eight, and he managed to clinch the ninth despite an attempt by Branco to drop to his knees complaining of a low blow, which left Bolen unconvinced.

Clearly demoralized, Branco found a spot on the canvas, clutching the back of his head a third time, early in round 10, after Pascal, 23-1 (15), overwhelmed him with another blinding flurry. But the Italian quickly regained his feet after the referee once more refused to rule a foul. Soon after, Pascal strafed him with another combination and landed a clean left hook that dumped Branco, 59-9 (36), for a legitimate knockdown. At that moment, realizing their man was thoroughly beaten, Branco's corner literally threw in a towel and entered the ring, conceding defeat. Bolen promptly waived it over at the 2:19 mark.

The win over Branco before a home audience helped to galvanize Pascal's already huge popularity in Montreal, where the sport tends to draw unusually large crowds. In their first bout, Pascal and Diaconu attracted more than 13,000 fans, making a rematch between the cross-town rivals inevitable. Their second fight was announced for December 11, moments after Pascal's victory over Branco.

Promoter: **GYM**
(9-25-09)

PHOTO BY JIJI PRESS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Kaowichit lands a left in clinch-filled fight with Kameda

Denkaosen Kaovichit W 12 Daiki Kameda

Osaka, Japan: WBA flyweight titlist Denkaosen, 112, Thailand, made his second successful defense since he dethroned Takefumi Sakata via pulverizing second-round demolition in Japan last December, but this time, there was no pulverizing going on. Instead, Denkaosen cleverly kept his distance against 20-year-old Japanese challenger Kameda, 112, worked the body, and withstood the youngster's retaliation down the stretch to be awarded a majority but well-received decision over 12 monotonous rounds.

It appeared clear that Denkaosen, 33, deserved the victory, but the judges didn't give it to him by much. Levi Martinez (USA) and Silvestre Abainza (Philippines) both scored 115-113 for Denkaosen, and Sergio Caiz (USA) saw it 114-114. The referee was Rafael Ramos (USA).

It seemed obvious that Denkaosen was the winner in terms of both effective punching and ring generalship. He took the initiative from the outset, aiming at the breadbasket of the peek-a-boo stylist. The Thai dominated the first five rounds as he kept jabbing and landing long right hooks to the belly. Kameda attempted to move forward but failed to throw jabs, and he didn't connect with any effective shots.

The sixth saw Kameda turn loose with combinations, while Denkaosen utilized his footwork and jabs to keep his distance. It was the beltholder who was in command in rounds seven and eight, when he repeatedly connected with looping rights to the body and grabbed the challenger to prevent him from throwing strong left hooks.

Kameda took the ninth with aggressive left hooks upstairs and down, as Denkaosen was visibly fading and repeatedly clinching. The Thai was encouraged by his cornermen, but he couldn't put any more rounds in the bank against the onrushing challenger. The youngster threw desperate, looping left hooks, but Denkaosen grabbed him and occasionally landed counters, lasting until the final bell with his lead holding up.

It was a lousy, clinch-filled fight. Kameda, 15-2 (11), revealed his lack of experience and finesse, seldom throwing jabs and allowing Denkaosen, 48-1-1 (20), to accumulate points with ease. Those early points were the difference in the end.

Promoter: **Kameda Promotions**
(10-6-09)
Joe Koizumi

Vyacheslav Senchenko W 12 Motoki Sasaki

Donetsk, Ukraine: With Shane Mosley elevated to "super champion" status at welterweight by the brain trust at the WBA, the organization's "regular" title at 147 pounds has fallen into the hands of Senchenko, 147, Donetsk, Ukraine, who retained the belt with a dominant display against Oriental-Pacific titleholder Sasaki, 147, Tokyo, Japan, at the Sportpalace. It was Senchenko's first defense, having overcome fellow Ukrainian Yoriy Nuzhnenko in April, also on points.

As a challenge, it could hardly have been lower on the Richter scale. Sasaki was the WBA's number-15 ranked contender and he had seven previous defeats on his record. A seven-fight winning streak went some way to disguising his ordinariness, but the veil slipped off as soon as the 31-year-old Ukrainian began to pump out his jab to immediate effect. Sasaki looked shorter than his reported 5'7", and the 5'10" Senchenko had no problem in controlling the exchanges.

Bigger and stronger, he was also tactically more astute and almost error-free in his performance.

For the first five rounds, Senchenko simply used his nous and natural advantages to pile up the points. Sasaki was wild and ineffectual and, frustrated by his negligible impact, he blatantly butted heads with Senchenko in the sixth round, forcing South African referee Stanley Christodoulou to deduct two points from his total. This was academic. Senchenko, 31, was also left with a serious cut above his right eye, but his corner controlled the flow of blood and the Ukrainian reverted to controlling the action.

Senchenko got cut over his left eye, however, when the 33-year-old Sasaki rushed him in the ninth round and threw a right hand that thudded into the Ukrainian's forehead. Encouraged by the sight of more blood, Sasaki, 32-8-1 (20), rampaged forward, but his work lacked the necessary guile, and Senchenko countered with a markedly greater degree of accuracy. The blood coming from his cuts were an issue, however, and his face was a crimson mess over the final rounds. But he did not panic, and the result was never in doubt.

Ignacio Robles (Panama), Steve Weisfeld (USA), and Robert Hoyle (USA) all scored 119-107 for Senchenko, as did THE RING. "He was like a bull, but I showed more class," Senchenko, 30-0 (20), said. Whether he could be competitive against the real class of the welterweight division is a question that requires more serious challenges than Sasaki was able to deliver.

Promoter: **Union Boxing Promotions**

(10-3-09)

Brian Doogan

Tony Grano KO 4 Travis Kauffman

Santa Ynez, California: Grano used heart and guile to take advantage of the inexperience of Kauffman in a heavyweight upset at the Chumash Casino.

The bout, which aired on Showtime's *ShoBox: The New Generation* series, was supposed to be another step toward an HBO date for the rising Kauffman, 18-1 (15). The 24-year-old Reading, Pennsylvania, native seemed well on his way to a win in the opening round, when he patiently used a longer, sharper jab while mixing in counter left hooks and straight rights against his slower opponent.

The game plan for Kauffman was to gradually break down Grano, 16-1-1 (13), and take him out late. But Kauffman began getting sloppy in the second round, when he got in closer, threw more powershots and fewer jabs, and started switching to southpaw. Grano, a tough 28-year-old from Hartford, Connecticut, who won the 2005 U.S. Nationals, began finding a home for his right hand in what became a fast-paced fight.

Despite his neglect for defense, Kauffman continued to get the better of it in the third as Grano started to tire. Sensing a chance to score an impressive stoppage, Kauffman went all out for the knockout at the start of the fourth. With Grano hurt, tired, hanging on, and taking shots early in the round, Kauffman looked to be one big punch away from ending it.

At that point, Grano got clever. With 1:50 remaining in the round, he landed what appeared to be an intentional low blow, which caused Kauffman to bend over in pain and prompted a timeout from referee Wayne Hedgepeth (USA). Kauffman only took a few seconds to recover, and Hedgepeth did not issue a warning to Grano before calling time-in. As Kauffman continued to fire away in hopes of winning by stoppage, he started running out of gas in the final minute. Meanwhile, a still reeling Grano spat out his mouthpiece 20 seconds before the bell, which gave him a needed breather while his corner washed off the gumshield.

When action resumed, Grano connected with a solid counter right that had Kauffman hurt. Suddenly it was Grano who was unloading in hopes of a stoppage. Kauffman, who either didn't know how to hold on or was too dazed to clinch, appeared to touch the canvas with his glove. Hedgepeth did not issue a standing-eight count, and a few seconds later, an out-on-his-feet Kauffman went down from what might have been a push, though he appeared to be on his way down anyway.

Kauffman regained his feet, only to stumble back to the floor, prompting Hedgepeth to stop it with four seconds to go in the round. "I started to get a little overconfident and was walking him down without my jab," Kauffman told the *Reading Eagle*. "The referee could have been more involved but, I'm not gonna cry about it. S___ happens. Real fighters bounce back."

A few days later, citing Hedgepeth's performance, the Kauffman camp issued a protest with the California State Athletic Commission in hopes of getting the bout ruled a no-contest. The protest was still pending as of press time.

Promoter: **Gary Shaw Productions**

(9-18-09) ■

PHOTO BY DWIGHT MCCANN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Grano outslugs Kauffman in wild brawl

Bigger and stronger, he was also tactically more astute and almost error-free in his performance.

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Grano outslugs Kauffman in wild brawl

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Oct. 2005: El Feroz With A Twist: Re-tooled Vargas Gets Defensive. Interview: Zab Judah. Also: Marco Antonio Barrera, Jean-Marc Mormeck, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., *KO* at 25.

Feb. 2006: Can Hip Hop Revitalize Boxing? Interview: Erik Morales. Also: Zab Judah, Ricardo Mayorga, Arturo Gatti, Luis Collazo, Roman Karmazin.

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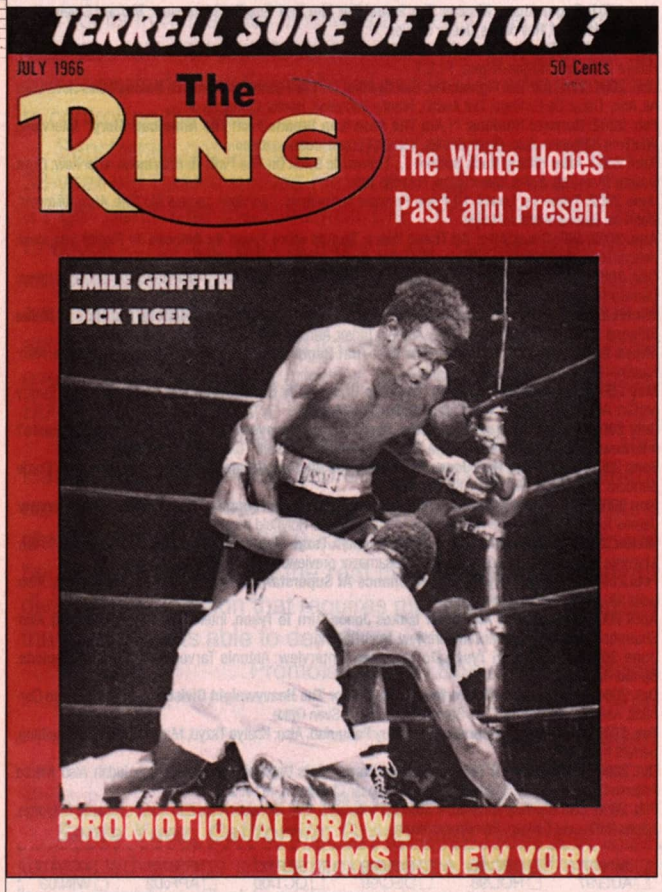


COVER STORY: "Emile Griffth Dick Tiger" is the unimaginative headline that pertains to the cover photo of Griffith and Tiger, while Nat Fleischer's article, "Who Won The Fight? Fleischer And Other Critics Back Tiger," carries a headline that is far more indicative of the story.

Griffith, the reigning welterweight champion, had moved up to middleweight to challenge Tiger for the 160-pound championship, but the unanimous decision in Griffith's favor was not well received, especially by Fleischer, who writes: "The verdict was one of the worst rendered in New York in many years ... the vast majority of the 14,934 spectators who paid a gross gate of $147,846 to see the welterweight and middleweight champion clash indicated clearly by their boos when the decision was announced, that they did not accept the official verdict."

Judges Frank Forbes scored it 7-6-2 in favor of Griffith, while Tony Castellano had it even at 7-7-1. But it was the 9-5-1 score of referee Arthur Mercante that Fleischer singled out as the most egregious. "It left reporters and spectators, even those who had Griffith ahead by a slight margin, flabbergasted."

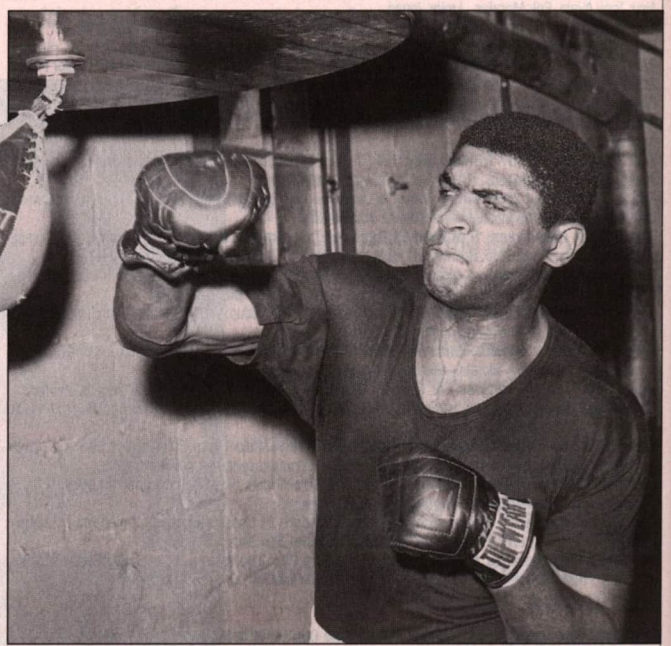
Fleischer summed up the scorekeepers by writing that they were, "honest but deluded."

"Terrell's Fortunes Took Upswing With Okay From FBI To Box Jones In Texas" by Dan Daniel examines the heavyweight situation, which was rife with various legal and political problems. Although Muhammad Ali was the genuine heavyweight champion, and recognized as such by THE RING, Ernie Terrell had won the bogus WBA title in 1965 and tallied a successful defense against George Chuvalo to earn the number-one contender spot in THE RING's ratings.

World Champions

(For the period ended May 20)

Heavyweight: Cassius Clay
Light Heavyweight: Jose Torres
Middleweight: Emile Griffith
Welterweight: Emile Griffith
Junior Welterweight: Sandro Lopopolo
Lightweight: Carlos Ortiz
Junior Lightweight: Flash Elorde
Featherweight: Vincente Saldivar
Bantamweight: Fighting Harada
Flyweight: Salvatore Burruni

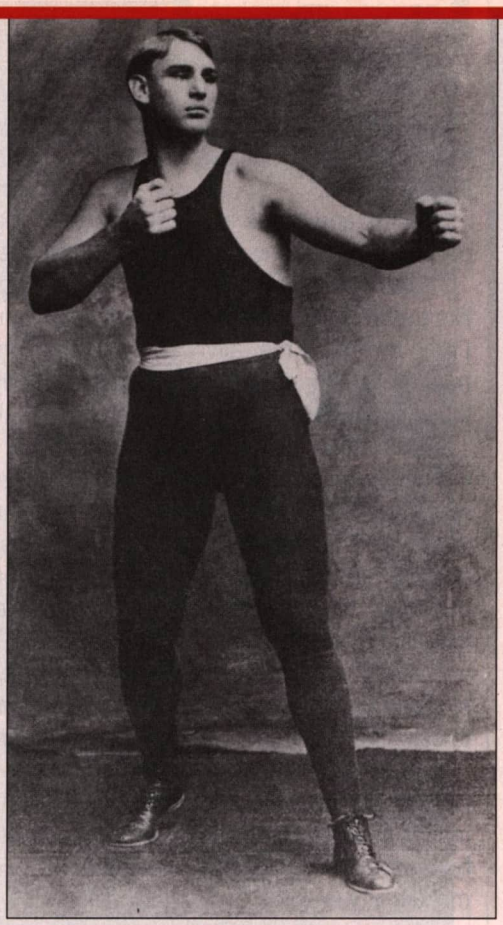


Number-one heavyweight contender Terrell rattles the speedbag

"As the plot unfolds it becomes more apparent than ever that there can be no satisfactory solutions until Cassius Clay fights Ernie Terrell," wrote Daniel, who, like all RING contributors, misguidedly insisted on calling Ali by his birth name, even though he'd legally changed it the previous year.

Terrell had caught the FBI's attention due to his relationship with Bernard Glickman, who was associated with several mobsters. But when Glickman was beaten by hoodlums and put into protective custody, the feds gave Terrell the green light to fight Doug Jones in Houston.

Meanwhile, Ali was forced to fight overseas, but Texas' willingness to host the Terrell-Jones match was the first step in bringing Terrell and Ali together in a U.S. ring. Ultimately, Terrell won a 15-round decision over Jones in June in 1966, leading to a unification bout with Ali (also in Houston) in which Ali breezed to a 15-round decision victory in '67.



Morris had high hopes until he ran into Flynn

"The White Hopes" by Jersey Jones looks back on the odd assortment of Caucasian heavyweights who emerged in the wake of Jack Johnson winning the heavyweight championship from Tommy Burns in 1908.

"The clamor for a white heavyweight to beat Johnson and 'restore the prestige of the white race' produced plenty of excitement," writes Jones. "Any Caucasian with size, strength, stamina, and punch was eligible for a tryout ... prospects came from every conceivable line of industry—railroad yards, farms, cattle ranches, lumber camps, docks, street cars, and office buildings."

One of the more interesting candidates was Oklahoma's Carl Morris, a railroad fireman, who did well until he was matched with veteran "Fireman" Jim Flynn at Madison Square Garden, where the "smaller but seasoned Flynn handed him a terrific lacing."

Although Jess Willard finally took the title away from Johnson in 1915, the job almost went to Gunboat Smith, who had beaten Frank Moran and Willard. But promoter Jack Curley selected Willard because he felt that Willard had the size, strength, and endurance that the lighter Smith lacked.

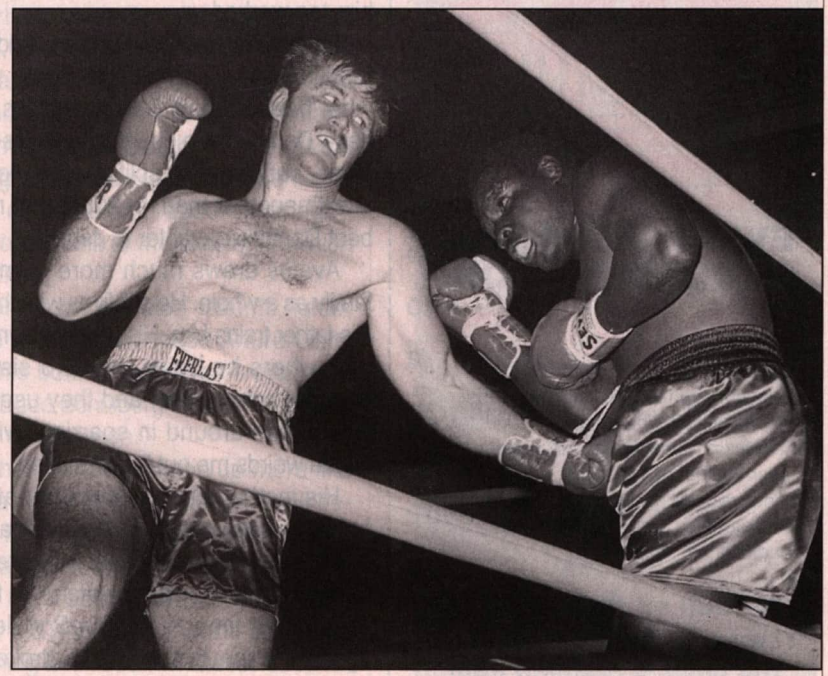
"Bodell Bubble Bursts" by Johnny Sharpe is the story of the British heavyweight hopeful Jack Bodell's quick demise against Californian Thad Spencer in Manchester, England. "Spencer gave our boy a sound thrashing and he was wise to hang out the retirement sign after two rounds," writes Sharpe.

"Quarry's Fast Knockout Of Scrapiron Advances Drive" by John Hall highlights Quarry's return to California, where he stopped Scrapiron Johnson in two rounds, following a draw with Tony Alongi in New York City.

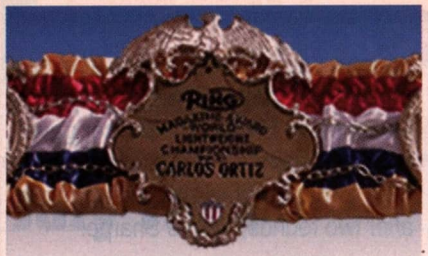
"Quarry has a lot of things going for him. He is young, promising, engaging, and loaded with talent," writes Hall. "However, he hasn't got it 'made' yet, by any means, and this fact should not be lost on his camp. His managerial connection gives the impression that Jerry faces a beautiful avenue strewn with roses. If there be roses, there also are thorns."

"Philadelphia Notes" by Archie Pirolli spotlights local welterweight Percy Manning's upset victory over future Hall of Famer Luis Rodriguez in front of more than 4,000 fans at the Philadelphia Arena.

"The fast-stepping Manning jabbed and maneuvered to avoid Rodriguez' rushes throughout the fight, and the Cuban did not land effective blows often," reported Pirolli. ■



Quarry wades into Johnson



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DON'T MISS WILLIAM DETTLOFF

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Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, The Ring's senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

Dettloff on ringtv.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

4748/10.09

[New Faces]

(Continued from Page 24)

you're a TV analyst or a fan, you want the explosiveness, where however long it lasts, it lasts."

Avalos and those around him, are confident he can find a middle ground.

"I know how to box," he said. "But I like to brawl. I just like the hype. When I'm in the ring I feel alive. But it's not healthy for somebody to be taking all those punches."

The reason Avalos' team thinks the kid can change is that, despite being what manager Mike Criscio calls "a young 20," once Avalos gets into the ring, he has the poise and confidence of a man. He may fight in a hyper-kinetic style, but he's focused. Andre Wilson, a former opponent whom Avalos stopped in two rounds, went so far as to call him "cocky."

Before flooring Caro in the fourth round, Avalos had to dig deep and recover from being rocked. The fact that he was suffering flu symptoms didn't make it any easier.

When in need of inner fortitude, Avalos needs think no further than his role model, big brother Danny. Danny, he said, has stayed strong "through a lot of things"—things Avalos isn't willing to talk about. He says his brother's past is personal and even thinking about it gets him too worked up.

Patricia Avalos, the matriarch, said the family is slowly coming to terms with what happened to Danny, but it's not easy. Danny had a daughter with his girlfriend, but after they split up, she moved in with another man. In 2005, that man beat Danny's daughter to death.

Avalos draws much more from his family as a whole. He still lives with them. His father trains him. His parents own the gym where he trains. His two sisters became boxers, too, and they used to smack him around in sparring, which "kinda weirds me out," said Avalos.

His mother sits 10 rows back at his fights to shout instructions, because she's too loud otherwise. His grandmother wanted to come watch him fight for the first time in his *ShoBox* debut against Wilson, but she had a stroke, so she came to the Caro fight instead. Avalos' own daughter, also by a former girlfriend, motivates him.

His parents, Criscio, and promoter Gary Shaw all rave about what a good heart he has, but Avalos has a mischievous side too. Trainer Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, who worked with Avalos for one fight, said the baby-faced fighter regularly sports a grin that says, "I didn't take the cookie out of the cookie jar."

He often works off whatever energy he has left after training by tormenting family members. "He loves to dance," said his mother. "He'll have his music up loud when everyone wants to go to sleep, but he keeps going."

The family dogs get the worst of it. From time to time, Avalos tosses both tiny animals, a Pomeranian and a Shih Tzu, into the backyard pool.

Despite bickering with his father, Avalos has never considered training with anyone else. He said everyone else tries to change him too much.

"He's still a baby. He wants to be around his family," said Muhammad, who praised Avalos' talent. "That's all good. Nothing against his father, who's an excellent trainer. He just needs to get Chris to move his head a little more."

Shaw said his own knees buckled when Caro buckled Avalos', but he was never too worried. He and Criscio pride themselves in putting their boxers in tough early so they're prepared when they move on to the elite level, and Avalos has sparred with a who's who of bantamweights and featherweights that include Abner Mares and Yuriorkis Gamboa.

Still, Shaw said that as the competition ramps up, Avalos has to improve his defense. Every boxer eventually runs into someone who hits harder, and when that happens to Avalos, he'd better be ready to outbox that opponent.

For now, Avalos has a lot of good qualities upon which to build.

"One-punch power is a big eraser," Farhood said. "It can mask defensive deficiencies."

Avalos had 104 amateur fights and made it to the Western Olympic trials, so he has a solid technical foundation.

Avalos nails Giovanni Caro with a right, during a September bout on ShoBox. Avalos scored a fourth-round kayo, but not before exciting the crowd, and, consequently, frightening his team, by getting rocked himself by Caro. Avalos' all-or-nothing style could attract a nice fan base.

But he got frustrated with amateur boxing politics because he thought he was robbed in a couple fights. Moreover, he was unable to make the Mexican boxing team, despite his parents' heritage, because of what Patricia alleged was discrimination against Avalos for not speaking fluent Spanish. Besides, he always had been told he had a more pro style.

Wilson said he grew overconfident from outboxing Avalos in the first round, taking advantage of Avalos dropping his left hand after jabbing. That led to Wilson getting caught in the second by a counter left hook that ruined his equilibrium and spelled the beginning of the end.

Shaw said Avalos has fast hands and places his punches well, which, in conjunction with what Avalos calls "natural" strength, is a boxing physics equation that equals knockouts. If Avalos keeps improving at his current rate, Shaw envisions him headlining a *ShoBox* card in 2010, then slowly graduating into a Showtime main event fighter.

Criscio sees Avalos' good looks, smile, and charisma, and thinks Oscar De La Hoya. Farhood said that might be shooting too high, since no bantamweight has ever caught on in the U.S. as big as De La Hoya. But the same thing could be said about most fighters, regardless of the division in which they fight.

For his part, Avalos' favorite fighter is the recently deceased Arturo Gatti. Like his boxing idol, Avalos practices what Budd Schulberg called "The Manly Art of No Defense."

Whether Avalos ends up more like De La Hoya or more like Gatti will depend heavily on whether Avalos ditches that particular manly art. But with what he's shown to this point as a hyper kid, it probably won't be boring watching him reach whatever destination he chooses. ■

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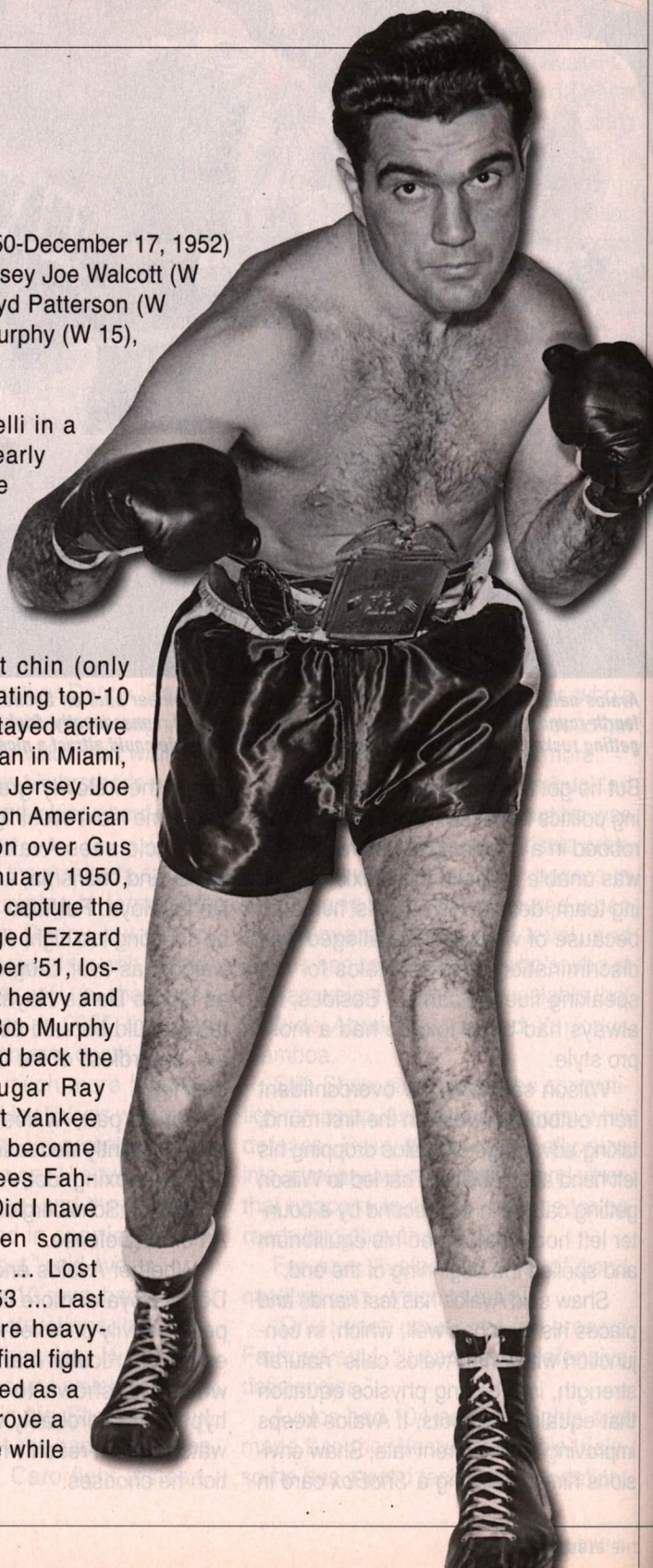
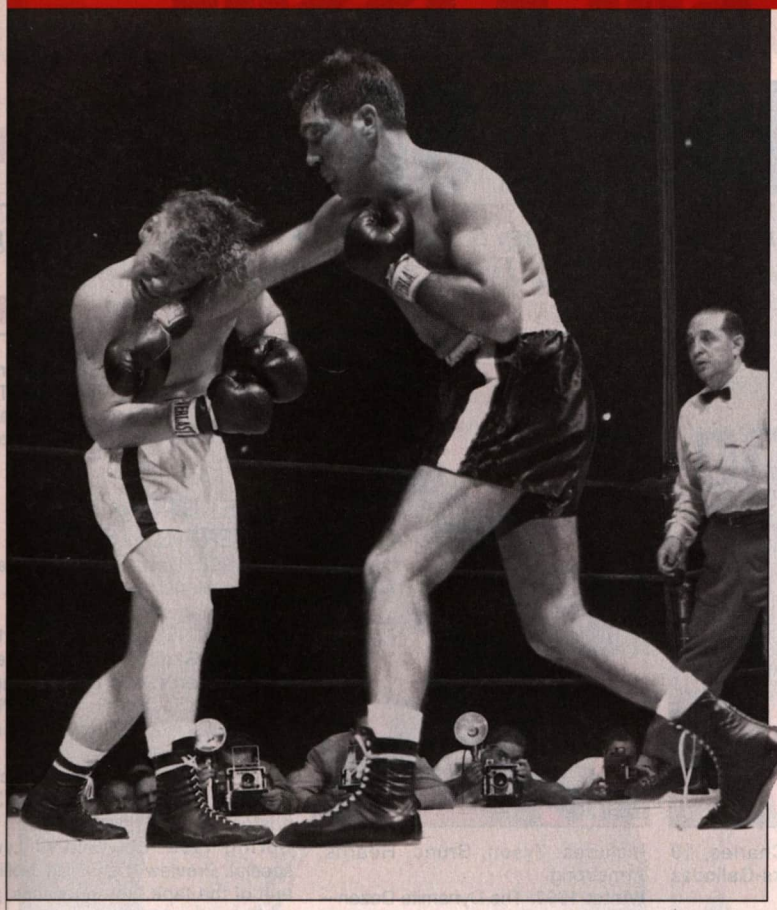
[Hall of Fame Profile]

THE RING features a thumbnail biography of a ring great who has received the ultimate honor: induction into the International Boxing Hall of Fame in Canastota, New York

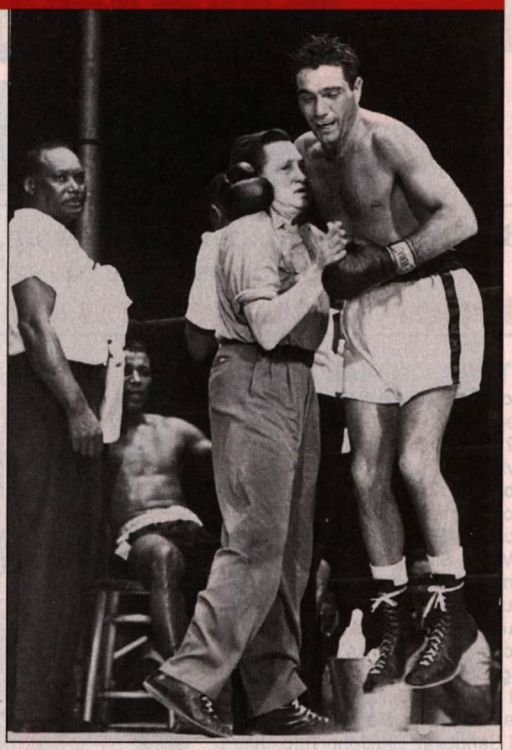
Joey Maxim



Birthdate: March 28, 1922
Date of Death: June 2, 2001
Birthplace: Collinswood, Ohio
Weight Class: Light Heavyweight, Heavyweight
Record: 82-29-4 (21)
Title Held: World light heavyweight (January 24, 1950-December 17, 1952)
Best Performances: Ray Robinson (KO 14), Jersey Joe Walcott (W 10), Freddie Mills (KO 10), Gus Lesnevich (W 15), Floyd Patterson (W 8), Jimmy Bivins (W 10), Bob Satterfield (W 10), Bob Murphy (W 15), Curtis Sheppard (W 10, W 10), Red Burman (W 10)
Year of IBHOF Induction: 1994
Background: Born Giuseppe Antonio Berardinelli in a suburb of Cleveland, Ohio ... Took up boxing at an early age, and in 1940 (fighting as a middleweight) won the Chicago Golden Gloves, the Intercity Golden Gloves, and the National AAU champions ... Turned pro in January 1941 at the age of 18 ... Ring name derived from the Maxim machinegun, due to the rapidity of his left jab ... Never a big puncher, he relied on his excellent left jab, clever boxing skills, and a great chin (only stopped once in 115 pro bouts) ... Surprised by beating top-10 contender Red Burman, in his first year as a pro ... Stayed active during World War II while serving as a military policeman in Miami, Florida ... Outpointed future heavyweight champion Jersey Joe Walcott (in Camden, New Jersey, no less) in '46 ... Won American light heavyweight title in '49 with 15-round decision over Gus Lesnevich ... Traveled to London, England, in January 1950, where he knocked out English slugger Freddie Mills to capture the world light heavyweight championship ... Challenged Ezzard Charles for the heavyweight championship in December '51, losing a 15-round decision ... Dropped back down to light heavy and retained the title with a 15-round decision over "Irish" Bob Murphy in his next bout ... In his most famous fight, he turned back the challenge of reigning middleweight champion Sugar Ray Robinson in June '52. Approximately 48,000 fans at Yankee Stadium saw Robinson build up a big lead, only to become exhausted by temperatures in excess of 100 degrees Fahrenheit and retire in his corner after the 13th round. "Did I have air-conditioning in my corner?" quipped Maxim when some refused to give him credit for beating Robinson ... Lost 175-pound championship to Archie Moore in June '53 ... Last hurrah came when he became the first to beat future heavyweight champ Floyd Patterson, in June '54 ... Had his final fight in May '58 ... Owned a restaurant in Cleveland, worked as a casino host and stand-up comic in Las Vegas, and drove a cab in Florida after quitting the ring ... Died of a stroke while living in West Palm Beach, Florida.

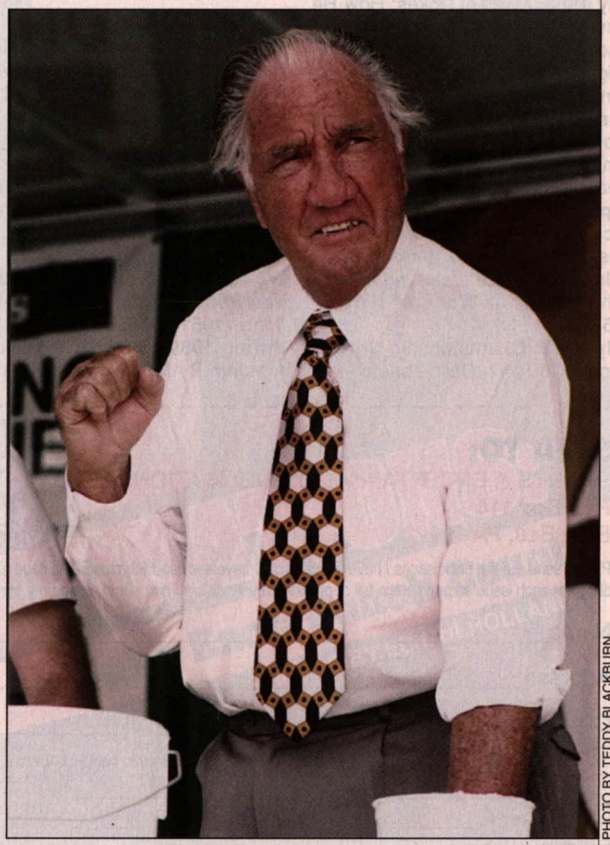


Maxim clips "Irish" Bob Murphy with a right during their August 1951 light heavyweight title bout at Madison Square Garden. Challenger Murphy was the favorite coming into the match, but Maxim won a comprehensive unanimous decision to retain the title.



A happy Maxim jumps and embraces referee Ray Miller as Robinson sits slumped on his stool. Ruby Goldstein had begun the bout as referee, but collapsed from the heat in the 10th round, and was replaced by Miller. That's Sugar Ray's manager, George Gainford, standing next to Robinson.

Maxim poses with former heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey and Jack "Doc" Kearns while training at Grossinger's resort, for his upcoming fight with Sugar Ray Robinson. Kearns managed both Dempsey and Maxim.



At last: Maxim has his fist cast in plaster at the International Boxing Hall of Fame in June 1994. The old champ was finally inducted that year, 36 years after his final fight.

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

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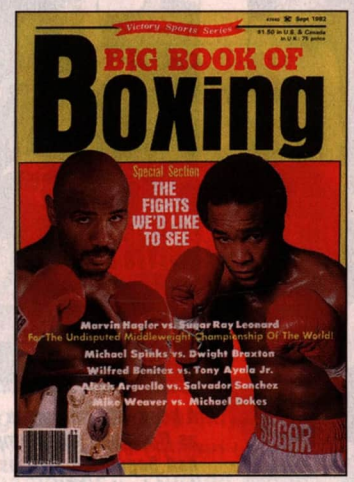

Napoles-Griffith, Ali, Charles, 10 meanest fighters, Spinks-Galindez dream fight.

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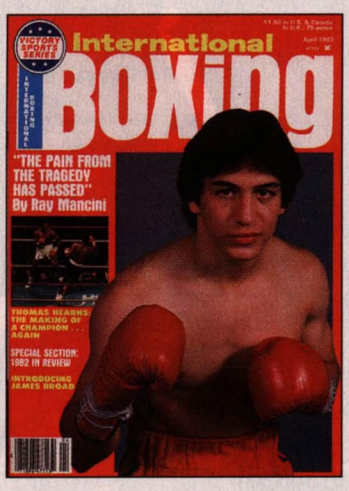

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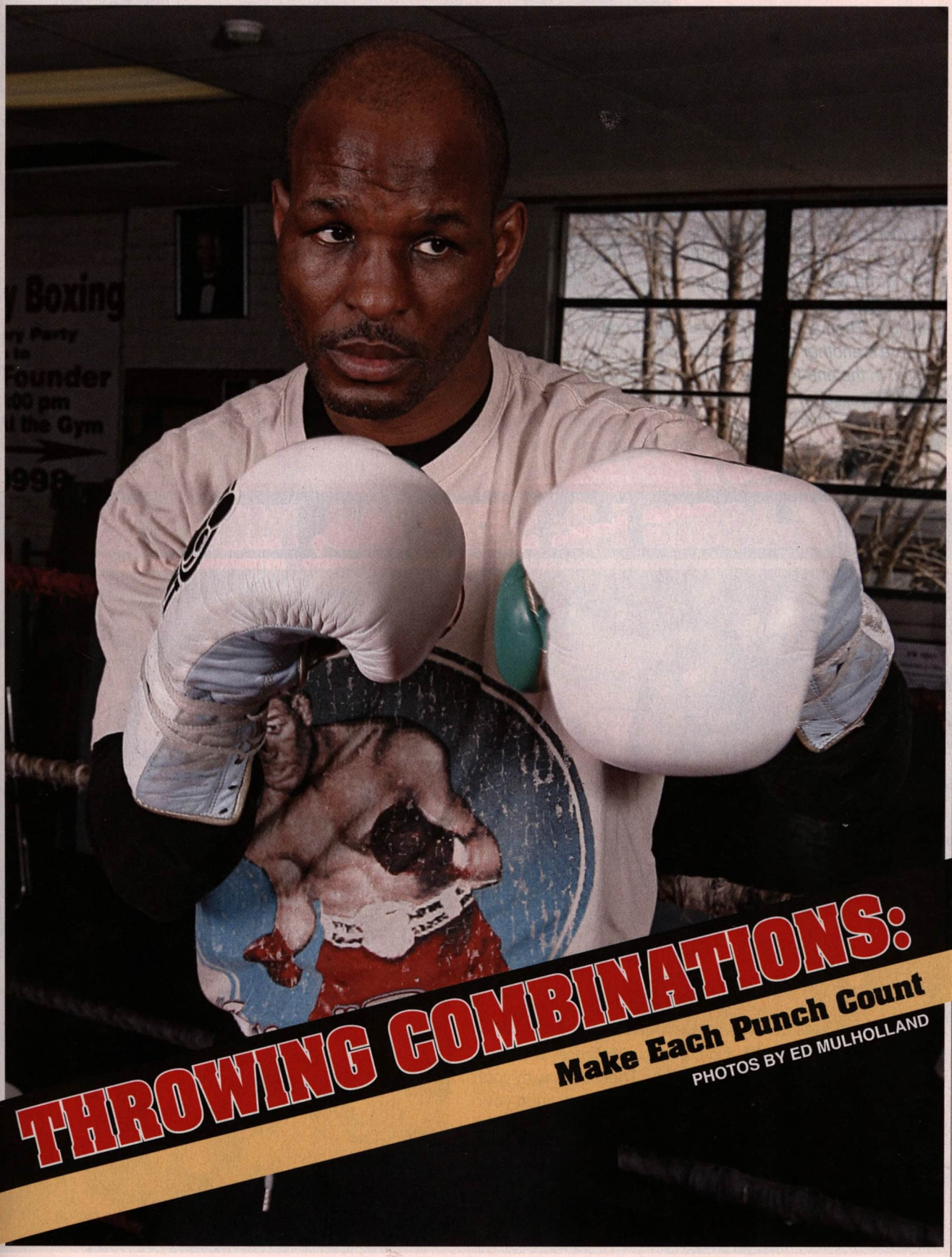
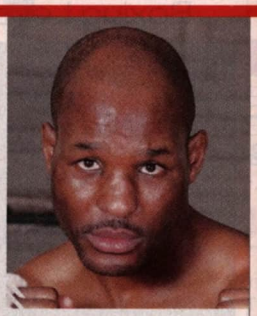
By Bernard Hopkins



THROWING COMBINATIONS:

Make Each Punch Count

PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND



BERNARD HOPKINS *Is the former middleweight and light heavyweight champion of the world.*

(All photos taken at Andy Carr's Gym in Upper Darby, PA)

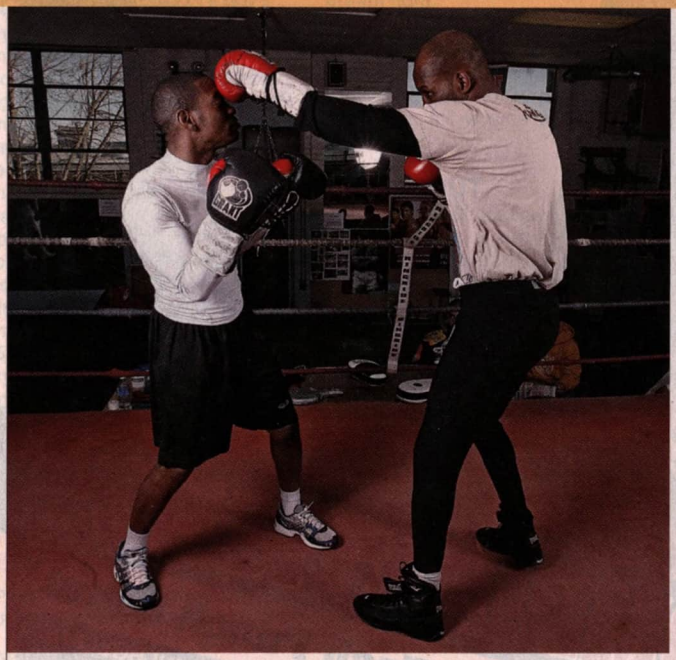
There's almost never a good reason not to throw combinations. You hear broadcasters talk all the time about how fighters shouldn't throw "one punch at a time," and they're right. You should always throw punches in combination. Why? Because you never want your opponent to know what you're going to do next. You always want to keep him guessing and off-balance. If he knows what's coming and can see it coming, then he can make you miss it and counter you.

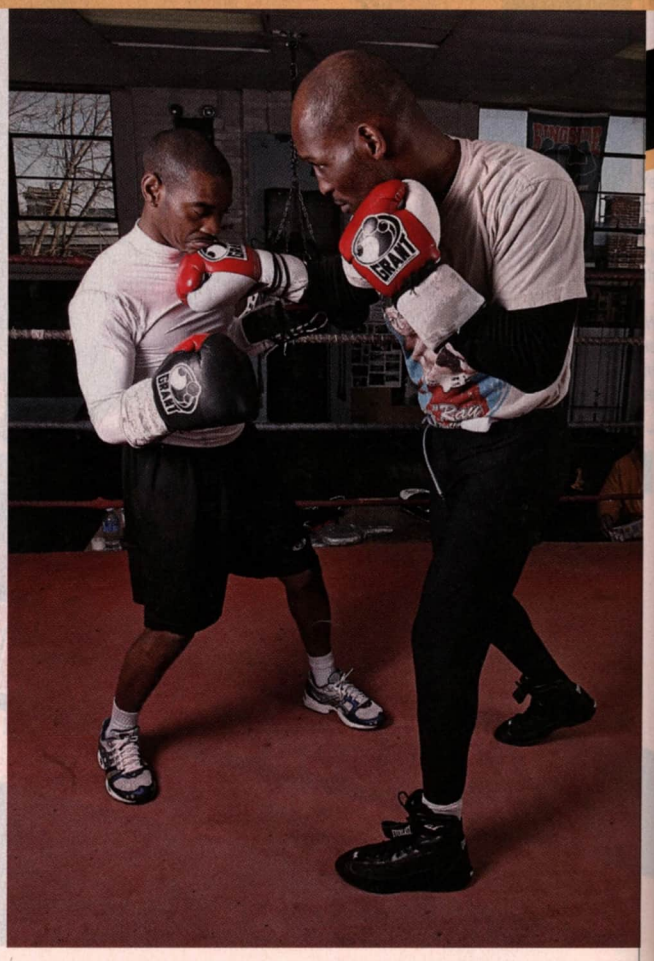
You ever see guys get counterpunched over and over? It's because they throw one punch at a time. They throw the jab and stop. Or they throw the right hand and stop. They throw the left hook and stop. They're predictable. All their opponent has to do is wait for them to throw that punch and then sit back and counter them to death, all day long.

When you throw combinations, your opponent doesn't know what's coming next. He can guess, and he might guess right sometimes, but a lot of the time he won't. Or even if he knows what's coming, he won't be fast enough to stop, or slip, or counter the next punch in your combination. He can't get ready to counter your punch because he knows that there's another one coming right behind it. Then another one behind that one. And maybe another.

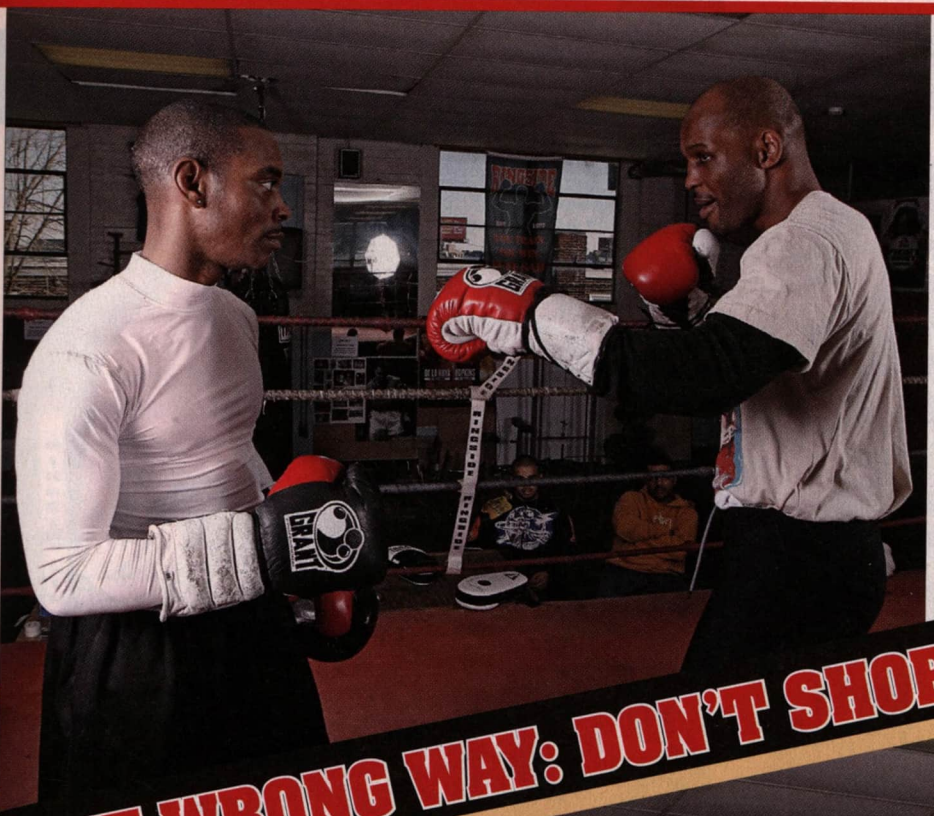
Here's another thing combination punching does for you—if it's done right, it sets up the next punch. In the one-two, the jab sets up the right hand. In the double hook to the body and head, the first one brings the right hand down so the one to the head can land. A right uppercut lifts your opponent's head into the path of a left hook. So throwing combinations doesn't mean going wild and throwing a lot of punches. When you do it right, every punch sets up the next punch or move. Here Danny Davis and I show you how.

THE CLASSIC 1-2: LEFT JAB, RIGHT HAND





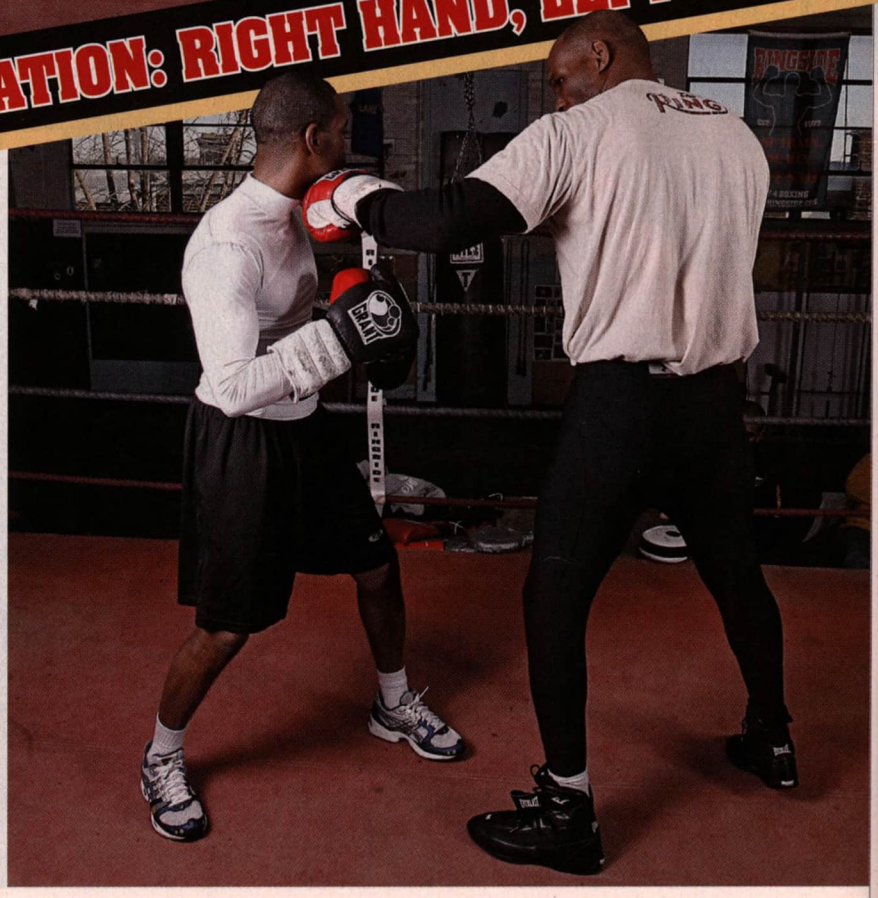
THIS IS THE WAY IT'S DONE. First, get your distance. You don't start a combination from too far away. Then, start with your jab, hard and straight. Step in with it. Punch *through* your opponent, not at him. Throw the jab the way you were taught to throw it and he won't be able to do a damn thing about the right hand that's coming behind it. And throw that right hand the way you were taught, too. Make each punch count. You throw each punch correctly and this is the result. Bam-Bam. Classic one-two.



DON'T SHORTCHANGE ONE OF THE PUNCHES IN YOUR COMBINATION BECAUSE YOU WANT TO GET TO THE NEXT ONE. It's cheating and it can only hurt you. I'm throwing a one-two at Danny here, but I really want to get to the right hand so I pull up short with the jab; I'm rushing it. As a result I'm not close enough and my right hand falls a little short of where it should. My own fault.

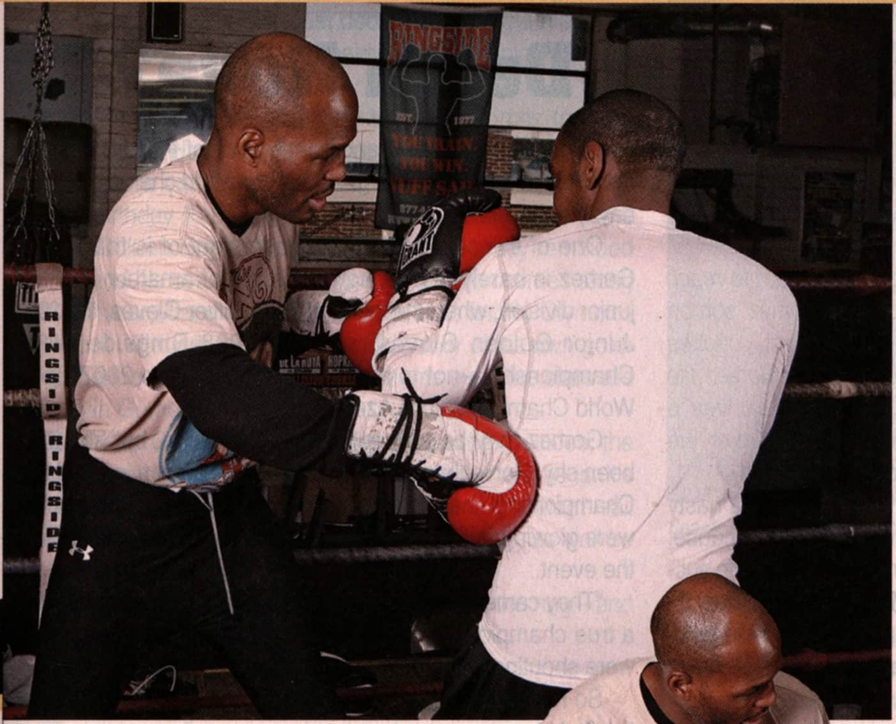
THE WRONG WAY: DON'T SHORTCHANGE

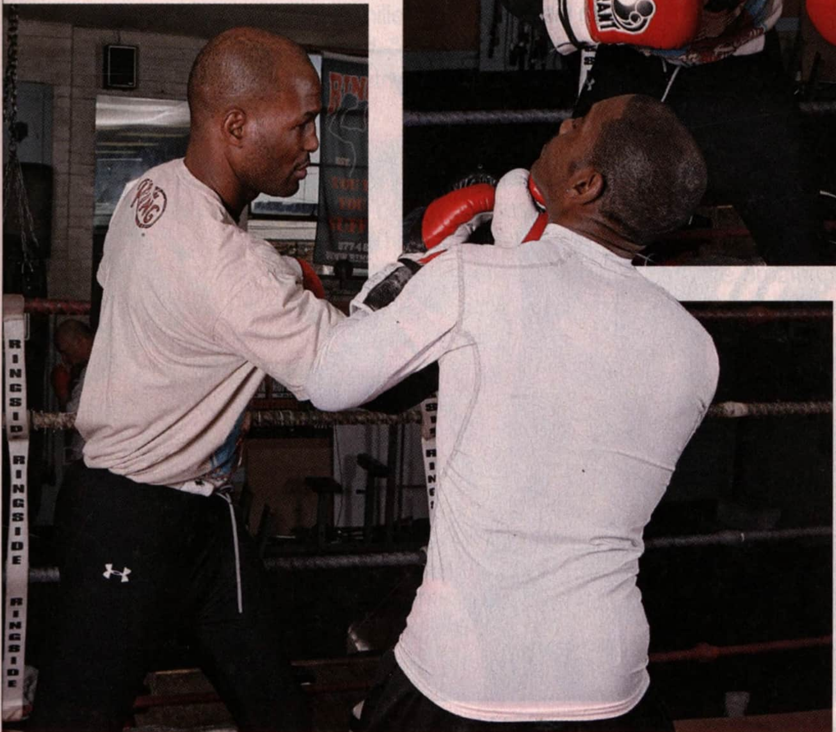
POWER COMBINATION: RIGHT HAND, LEFT HOOK



TRAINERS USED TO TELL YOU NEVER TO LEAD WITH A RIGHT HAND—THAT IS, NEVER THROW ONE WITHOUT A JAB BEFORE IT. But you can do it if you're quick enough. A good, quick straight lead right is a good weapon against a slower guy, but only if you come back with a hook after it. Throwing the hook gets you back into position after the right and if you can land two power punches in a row like this you're in business.

BODY AND HEAD: THIS IS THE COMBINATION





THIS IS THE COMBINATION I HIT FELIX TRINIDAD WITH RIGHT BEFORE I STOPPED HIM IN THE 12TH ROUND. He was already on shaky legs and I drew him into the ropes; he thought he had me trapped. I came off with the right to the body to bring his hands down and got in perfect position to rip through the right uppercut. Perfect execution. A couple minutes later it was all over.

By Michael Rivest

Is Gomez The Next De La Hoya?

It's not easy to reach Frankie Gomez. You'd think the winner of the 2009 U.S. National Championships (141 pounds) and silver medalist at the 2009 AIBA World Championships in Milan, Italy, would be anxious to talk.

Actually, Gomez doesn't mind talking; it's just hard to *reach* him. You don't get Concepcion and Augustine Gomez' son on the phone just because you write for THE RING. First, coaches Ronnie Rivota and Hector Ibarra, who have been in Gomez' life since childhood, have to approve of you. Then Ibarra drives to the Gomez home and explains in Spanish, while you're on the phone, whether he feels permission should be granted.

"Frankie's mom and dad know that boxing can be a nasty business and they're very protective," Ibarra said. "Because, you see, what matters to them isn't boxing success; it's life success." Amen to that and all respect to Mr. and Mrs. Gomez.

"My parents just want good things for me," Frankie said, "and they're afraid of some of the bad influences that are out there."

But it's going to get harder and harder to keep the lid on this kid. "He's that good," says Ron Sims, coach of the U.S. Marine Corps Boxing Team and head coach of the U.S. team at the Milan event. "Frankie's going to be a world champion someday, you watch."

One of the easiest things to lose sight of is that, at 17, Gomez is barely old enough to be out of amateur boxing's junior division, where he won the 2004 Silver Gloves, the 2005 Junior Golden Gloves, and the 2008 Ringside World Championship—not to mention the Gold in the 2007 Cadet World Championship in Azerbaijan.

Gomez may be new to the senior division, but he hasn't been shy. Roniel Iglesias may have defeated him in the World Championship finals, but the Cuban sensation and his coaches were glowing in their praise of Gomez, the youngest finalist at the event.

"They came up to me a few times saying Frankie fought like a true champion," Ibarra said. "The crowd knew it too. They were shouting his name."

So how does a 17-year-old kid handle this kind of adulation?

"I may have been far away," Gomez said, "But I was with Coach Ibarra, and my family and Coach Rivota were with me in my heart. That settled my mind and keeps me grounded."

Does he ever miss just being a regular kid and hanging out with his friends?

PHOTO BY ALBERTO PIZZOLI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Gomez en route to a victory over Gyula Kate at the AIBA World Championships

"Yes, I miss that, but I know that all of this will pay off in the long run. I know I won't be sorry when I look back someday."

"Frankie shows a very rare combination of maturity and focus," said Sims. "It's the kind of qualities that come from great stability in life—real roots. When we got to the venue in Milan, he didn't even want to warm-up; he was just ready to go."

"Frankie Gomez is the most dedicated young athlete I've seen since Oscar De La Hoya," said Nick Cimmento, manager of the U.S. team in Milan.

It was an especially gratifying thing for Gomez to hear, because De La Hoya happens to be Frankie's big inspiration.

Here are a couple of facts that can give you the willies. Gomez' birthday, February 4, is also, you guessed it, the same as "The Golden Boy's." Also, De La Hoya recently reminded Gomez and his coaches that "a great champion comes along every 20 years," and that when Gomez aims for the Olympics in 2012, it will mark the 20-year anniversary of his own gold-medal performance in Barcelona. It seems even the stars are aligning in Gomez' favor.

But Camp Gomez is too busy for stargazing. Besides, the stars had nothing to do with how Gomez got where he is. It's the result of determination, hard work, and huge talent—all supported by a loving family and coaches who may as well be family too.

The Camp Gomez star isn't in the sky, it's in the ring—and it's rising.

The Men Behind Gomez

"Frankie was five-years old when he came into L.A.'s 1st Street Boxing Gym," said coach Rivota. "And coach Hector Ibarra came on the scene a short time after that. We've been with Frankie ever since." And when you consider how much time Frankie has spent in the gym in the past 12 years, these three are more family than most families.

"In Latino culture," Ibarra added, "everything begins and ends in the home. We don't do anything that isn't consistent with what Frankie's parents want."

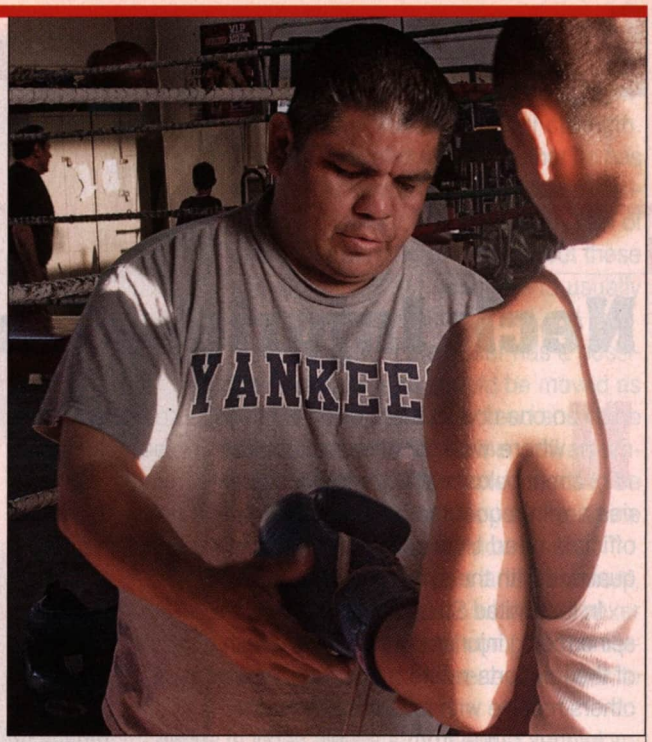
Ibarra quickly corrects himself, pointing out that although he would never go against Concepcion Gomez' wishes for her son, he's recently learned that he's been doing just that from the beginning. "She just confessed to not only me, but Frankie, that she never wanted him to box at all," Ibarra said with a laugh. "But she loves Frankie so much, she didn't want him to know that, because she knew how badly he wanted it."

When Gomez left for Milan to compete in the AIBA World Championships, Sims took over as head coach. Was that hard for Ibarra and Rivota? "Not at all," Ibarra said. "Ron Sims is a great coach, and we knew that's just the way it works in international tournaments."

It turned out to be a chance for both coaches to get feedback on the work they'd been doing.

"I didn't have to do anything other than explain the international stuff," Sims said. "Frankie is such a well-coached boxer, a complete boxer. Ibarra and Rivota have done a spectacular job with him."

That's high praise from somebody who ought to know.



Coach Rivota has been with Gomez from the start

Coach Talk

Talking to U.S. coach Ron Sims without asking him about amateur boxing would be like sitting down with Stephen Spielberg and not talking movies—he's an expert.

Here are his thoughts:

- **On amateur boxers:** "I'm concerned. We're living in a different time, a different culture than we were a generation ago. The discipline and desire to be the best—the personal need to be the best—has diminished. Kids just don't think that way."
- **On coaches:** "Too many coaches want to be a friend to their boxers, rather than a mentor. I recently met with the number one- and number two-ranked boxers in the country and asked them what was wrong with coaches today. They said that athletes need to be held responsible. They need to be disciplined when they show up late or don't do what they're supposed to. This should tell us something."
- **On the USA Olympic Team hopes for 2012:** "USA Boxing needs to get past Olympic coaches together and have them list the problems of the last four Olympic Games, and then develop solutions. We also need to compete in more international tournaments and have U.S. officials officiate the same way international officials do it. When we get to international tournaments, it shouldn't feel new. " ■

Coming Events

January 2010: Silver Gloves Regional Bouts throughout the country

February 3–6: National Silver Gloves Tournament, Hilton Garden Inn Convention Center, Independence, Missouri

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

Neck Injuries: Rare But Dangerous

No one doubts that boxing is the ultimate contact sport, where well-conditioned athletes subject their entire musculoskeletal system to injury. Although neck injuries are infrequent to boxers, trainers, fighters, and ringside officials need to prevent cervical trauma and become acquainted with the symptoms and basic treatment.

In the United States, approximately 10,000 severe cervical spine (neck) injuries occur annually, with approximately 1,000 of these sports-related. Typically, hundreds of thousands of others resolve with minimal treatment.

Injuries range from a simple cervical sprain, (tightness on one side of the neck noticed within 12-24 hours, resolved with ice, heat, anti-inflammatory medication, and stretching exercises) to nerve root compression (resulting in tingling, numbness, or weakness in an arm) to cervical spine fracture, resulting in spinal cord injury and possible paralysis that may not respond to surgical stabilization.

The skull is connected to the cervical spine. These bony vertebrae (spine segments) protect the spinal cord from direct or indirect trauma—but not always. A boxing knockout produces hyperextension or rotation of the head. The velocity and force exerted on the skull produces considerable torque or pressure on the neck.

Besides heredity and natural anatomy, a boxer can develop protective factors that prevent knockouts. Usually we attribute this to a strong chin/jaw, a good mouthguard, and an effective defense. But nothing works better than a strong cervical spine. Certainly a boxer doesn't need a linebacker's neck, but developing strong cervical musculature will stabilize the spine and prevent head rotation or extension that disrupts brain circulation and causes loss of consciousness.

Former WBA light heavyweight titleholder and Las Vegas trainer, Eddie Mustafa Muhammad, stresses improving neck strength in his boxers.

"The neck is a shock absorber," said Mustafa Muhammad. "It keeps the brain in place. A strong neck lets you take that punch successfully. I definitely work on strengthening fighters' necks in the gym. I believe in old-school methods. I attach a

Sonny Liston demonstrates a classic neck-strengthening technique

round 20-pound dumbbell to a rope, and the rope to a neck harness. I then have the boxer slowly rotate his head around; perhaps they do 10 reps, five times."

It is hard to forget George Foreman's neck strengthening technique, which involved walking up a farm road pulling a tractor with a head-brace and harness attached to it. Perhaps this is why he suffered only one kayo loss in 81 fights and retired with all his faculties.

In the late-1980s, fitness expert Mackie Shilstone was the first to work with professional boxers. His program, The Fitness Principle, located at New Orleans' East Jefferson General Hospital, assesses professional athletes from all over the world. Besides clients such as Bernard Hopkins, for the last two years he has been working with tennis star Serena Williams.

"I was one of the first guys to bring conditioning and weight training to boxing, starting with Michael Spinks," said Shilstone.

He believes that to strengthen the cervical spine you have to work on the neck, shoulder, hip, and ankle all at once as they function in the same plane of motion.

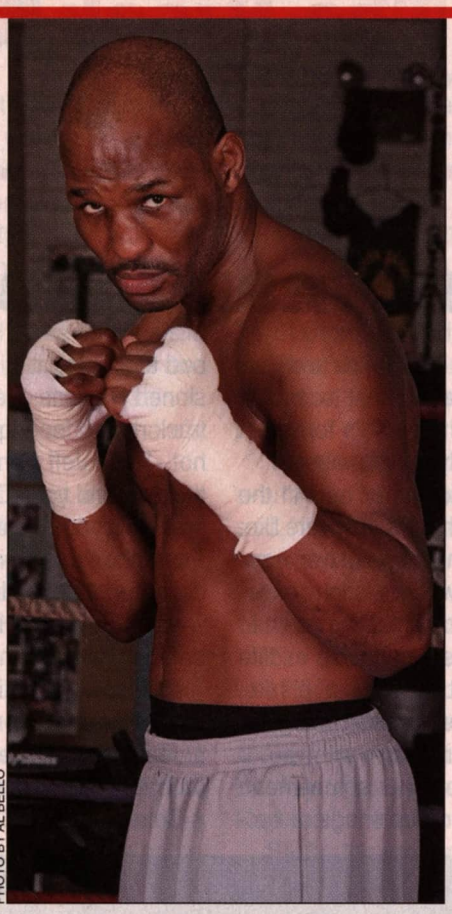


PHOTO BY AL BELLO

Bernard Hopkins executes the chin tuck

"I find too much anterior dominance in boxers (emphasis on frontal musculature)," said Shilstone. "On sparring days, I use a small-weight program for the posterior shoulder consisting of four exercises with 1-3-pound dumbbells, 25-30 reps each. It is important to concentrate on more than just the neck by stabilizing the shoulder and thoracic spine."

This strengthens the neck by improving muscles that connect to it, such as the trapezius.

From the start, amateur boxers are taught to maintain a chin-tuck. So, if he advances to the professionals, his neck is already accustomed to a flexed position, and he is less likely to get rocked when his head is struck. However, a bad chin tuck, along with a weak neck, could hinder or destroy a fighter's career.

Although serious neck injuries are relatively rare in boxing, they are not outside the realm of possibility.

In the ring, if a fighter suffers loss of consciousness from a blow, or their neck falls against the ropes as they collapse, the ringside medical staff should have a game plan. The physician must place a stiff collar around the boxer's neck, make certain he has an open airway and is breathing, and examine him for neurological signs like numbness, weakness or tingling of the arms or legs. Intravenous steroids are usually given immediately as a precaution to limit or improve any spinal cord swelling.

Once the spine is stabilized, if the boxer is awake, the ring physician can ask him or her to squeeze their hands and move both legs. The doctor is looking for symmetric movement and equal strength. The athlete is also asked whether he has changes in sensation. If he is just experiencing a "stinger," he might complain of one-sided burning or tingling, but these symptoms are not serious and usually last seconds to minutes.

In the gym, if the boxer has a possible neck injury, he should be moved as little as possible, but his head and spine should be in a straight line until an ambulance arrives. If the boxer needs to be moved, roll him like a log so the spine alignment remains in place.

Following diagnosis and treatment, the question becomes when the boxer can return to train and compete, as certain conditions predispose their neck to recurrent injury.

Transient quadriplegia or temporary weakness or paralysis of either the arms, legs, or all four extremities can last between 15 minutes to 48 hours with complete return of function. Imaging studies, such as an MRI, are usually normal. But, there is a 40-percent chance of an athlete experiencing a second episode with repeated contact.

If the athlete sustained a fracture, this alone could be a contraindication to fighting again, unless the injury has thoroughly healed. He should be free of any neurological symptoms (weakness or sensory loss) and have a large enough spinal canal so the nerves and spinal cord have sufficient room. If the boxer has had surgery, he must be scanned (via CT or MRI) before every bout and examined by a neurologist or neurosurgeon.

Former IBF lightweight titleholder Vinny Paz returned to the ring after a serious motor vehicle accident that broke his neck in 1991. Following surgery, many thought he would never box again, but he did successfully.

When Paz traveled to Las Vegas to fight Roberto Duran in 1994, the Nevada commission had him undergo extensive testing to make certain his cervical spine was still stable. He was then cleared to fight.

Just because there is no record of catastrophic neck injuries in boxers doesn't mean they cannot occur. Furthermore, as boxers receive little testing before a fight, it is difficult to determine that they don't enter competition with a pre-existing problem that could become dangerous if punched. Headgear can aggravate a cervical problem because it makes the head heavier and will further predispose it to rotation or extension when struck. Most importantly, during a fight, the ring physician needs to coordinate everyone's role should a possible cervical injury occur to limit catastrophic repercussions. ■

By Jim Bagg

Better Never Than Late

Before agreeing to a 2010 rematch, Roy Jones and Bernard Hopkins should have taken a moment to consult with the Inglorious Baggsterd, the world's foremost expert in getting older without necessarily getting wiser.

Hopkins will turn 45 on January 15. Jones will turn 41 the next day. The Baggareeno remembers what his 40s were like. (The 1860s were a wild time.) A man can go one of two ways in his 40s: He can reach a peak of sorts, where wisdom, experience, and maturity combine with a hint of remaining youth to bring out the absolute best in him. Or he can go into midlife crisis mode and make some of the worst decisions of his life. Roy and 'Nard, sorry to say it, but it seems you're doing the latter, and you're bringing the boxing world down with you.

By the time they step into the ring together sometime in the new year (assuming there are no tune-up snags or second thoughts), it will have been 17 years since Jones decisioned Hopkins over 12 lousy rounds at RFK Stadium. The track record for sequels after such a substantial gap ain't so hot. Think Jeff Fenech-Azumah Nelson III, 16 years after their second fight. Or *The Godfather III*, 16 years after Fredo broke Michael's heart. And, remember, Fenech-Nelson I and II and the first two installments of the Corleone family saga delivered the goods. Jones-Hopkins I was a dud, and that was back when Hopkins was more about offense than defense, which is no longer the case.

Bottom line: This fight is almost guaranteed to stink. If we got Barrera-Morales IV in their 40s, it would be sad, but at least it would be action-packed. Jones-Hopkins II could probably be billed as "Feint-Fest 2010." Or maybe "Fun As A Colonoscopy." (Speaking of which, Roy and Bernard, you

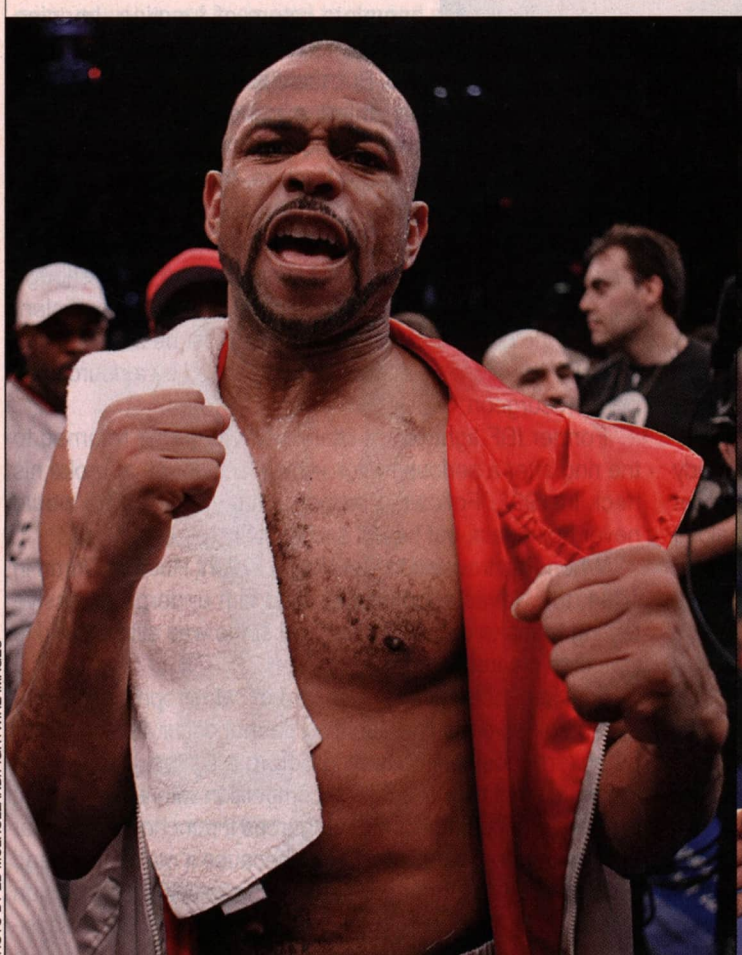


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

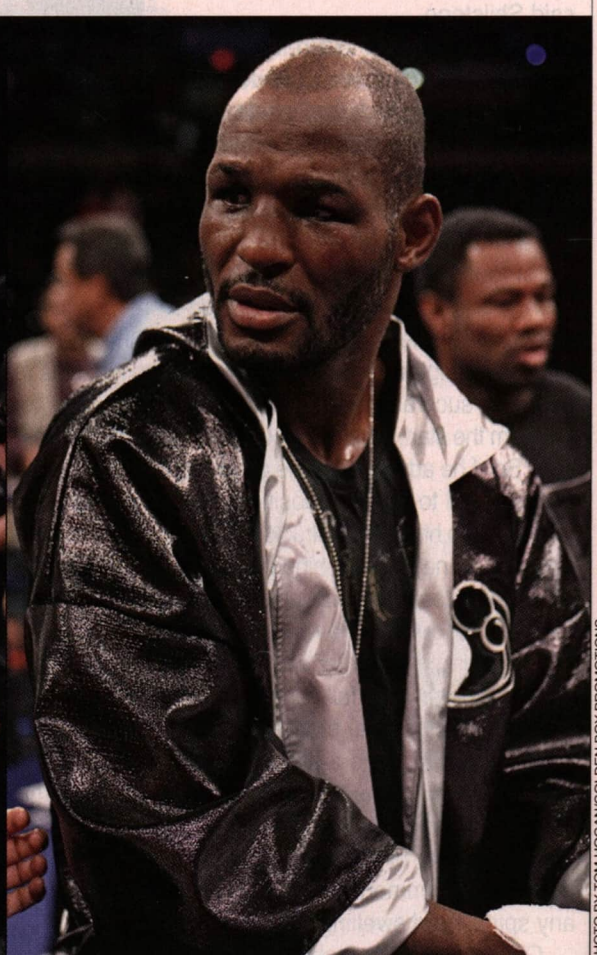


PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Maybe B-Hop can shut up Jones and Bagg the same night

guys are old enough now that you'd better schedule an appointment.)

Or here's another name for the fight: "Joe Calzaghe's Leftovers." Both of these fighters lost to Calzaghe, and the Welshman was smart enough to retire, but his victims were not. Is this what boxing's power brokers want to tell the mainstream world is happening in the fight game? Jones-Hopkins II *is* going to get a heaping helping of mainstream attention, and when it does, there will invariably be people rambling on about how "dead" boxing is if these old farts still constitute a big fight. It's like when an overnight guest discovers the Viagra in the Bagg-a-donuts' medicine cabinet. Just having a couple of pills around implies that there's something wrong with the equipment.

Ultimately, this is going to be a sad, boring, depressing night for boxing. But with possible eight-figure pay-per-view paydays involved, Hopkins and Jones are making a money grab and will not be dissuaded. And that's as unfortunate for them as it is for boxing, since a loss could potentially do serious damage to either man's legacy.

For several years now, Hopkins and Jones have largely been measured against each other. They represented opposite qualities: the guy who was born great and was satisfied to use his natural gifts, and the guy who made himself great without the benefit of unusual athleticism. As a result, boxing fans and observers were almost forced to choose one or the other and argue their side.

The tiebreaker in an argument in favor of Jones is the head-to-head history. If he and B-Hop are comparable in what they've accomplished, then doesn't the edge go to the guy who won the one time they fought each other?

The tiebreaker in an argument in favor of Hopkins is the longevity. Maybe Jones was better in his prime, but Roy's prime ended conclusively and concussively in 2004, whereas Hopkins kept doing great things deep into this decade.

If Jones loses to Hopkins in 2010, guess what happens to his head-to-head edge? The same thing that's happened to the Baggmometer's hair over the last 30 years.

And if Hopkins loses to Jones in 2010, guess what happens to his claim of superior longevity? The same thing that happens to a tray of burritos left unattended in front of Chris Arreola.

For Jones, maybe a loss can be dismissed (especially by his oft-delusional fans) on account of the longevity element. "Sure, Hopkins won this one," they'll say, "but Jones won when they were in their prime, and that's what really counts." And no, the Roy Boys won't be interested in your intelligent counter-argument that Hopkins wasn't in his prime yet when he lost to Jones in 1993. They'll still have their little out-clause.

Hopkins, however, has no out-clause. A loss does enormous damage to his all-time standing. He will have lost to Jones when they were young and lost to him again when they were old. "The Executioner" will have no basis for claiming to be the best of his era. He'll be LaMotta to Jones' Robinson. Not that there's anything wrong with being Jake LaMotta (other than perhaps his Bagg-eclipsing divorce rate), but that's a major gamble for Hopkins to take just to make a big paycheck. And if rumors of his careful dissemination of his money are correct, it's a paycheck he doesn't really need.

This is a fight that's more trouble than it's worth for boxing, more trouble than it's worth for Jones, and way more trouble than it's worth for Hopkins. It's happening because of ego (both fighters want to be involved in another fight that gets the world talking about them without the need for a Captain Hook outfit) and because of money.

In announcing the fight, promoter Richard Schaefer said, "A lot of people didn't believe it would ever happen. But guess what? It's going to happen."

Notice he didn't say anything about anybody wanting it to happen.

The '90s are over. In fact, the decade after the '90s will be over by the time Jones-Hopkins II happens. But as Schaefer said, "It's going to happen." Sounds more like a threat than a promise, doesn't it?

Roger The Dodger

The question has to be asked: Are we *sure* Jeff Mayweather is related to the other Mayweathers? Is it possible he was adopted? Jeff is, dare we say it, normal. He's well-spoken, stays out of trouble, and wasn't gifted with much in the way of boxing genes. None of those qualities add up to Mayweather-hood.

Sadly, though, one Mayweather has separated himself from the pack on the insane/troublemaking end of the spectrum, and that's Roger. While the Floyds are egomaniacs

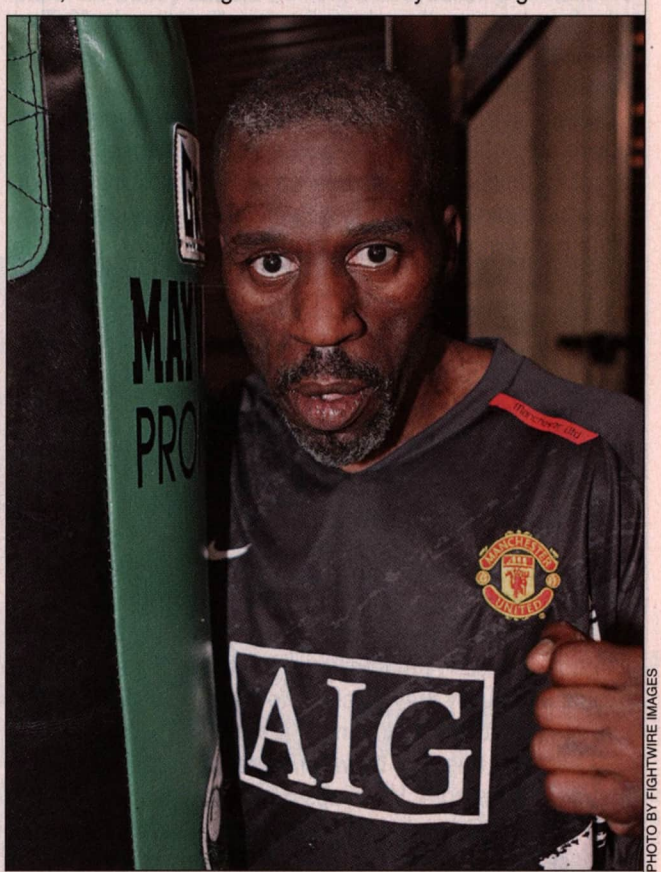


PHOTO BY FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Uncle Roger: Stupid, crazy, or both?

The Monthly Mailbagg

Very quickly, before Kanye West has a chance to interrupt the Bagg-Crackle-Pop, let's get to this month's reader mail:

Dear Baggadocio,

Thanks for some much needed intelligence after having to endure Jeff Ryan's idiot jokes for decades and Lennox Lewis' snobbish attitude in his last RING interview. In that interview, Lewis repeatedly bragged about his destruction and, in a way, humiliation of Mike Tyson in 2002. He placed himself in the top five heavyweights of all-time, but that reveals a good dose of arrogance and the tendency to unjustified self-hype. What Lewis conveniently forgets is that the match every boxing expert would have loved to see is one between these two fighters in their prime. The Tyson beaten by Lewis was a desperate man on anti-depressive drugs, fighting only to pay a huge amount of debts back to the IRS and Showtime, and whose psychological stability was evidently at an all-time low. My question for you is, who wins between Lewis and Tyson in their primes?

Massimo Ricci

PHOTO BY JEFF JULIAN/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

All-time great or snobbish braggart?

No-Massimo,

Let the Baggnanimous start with one simple question: If you consider Ryan's columns something painful to "endure," why have you continued reading him "for decades"? That would be like the Baggalicious watching *The View* every day or insisting on finishing a carton of curdled milk.

That aside, you're smart to butter up the Baggster, and you're correct to note that Lewis' opinion of himself doesn't count for much. Maybe he beats a prime Tyson, maybe not, but wins over "Iron Mike" and Evander Holyfield when they were both faded and Lennox was not are hardly cause to call the big Brit the best heavyweight of his generation. That status still belongs to Holyfield, who fought *everyone* and arguably deserved the decision in his second fight with Lewis despite being somewhat used up.

Lewis calling himself a top-five heavyweight is a little bit like the Baggapalooza calling himself the world's greatest boxing writer. Oh, wait. The Baggapotamus *is* the world's greatest boxing writer. So never mind, bad example. Still, it doesn't matter what Lennox thinks of himself; his all-time great ranking is determined by the experts, and not many rank him in the top five. Yes, he ranks ahead of Tyson, whose reign was all too brief. But when you've been knocked out by Oliver McCall and Hasim Rahman, you should consider yourself lucky to crack an impartial observer's top 10.

who have both run afoul of the law, neither has ever pulled a stunt as idiotic as what Roger did in October, skipping out on his scheduled court appearance for battery and coercion charges. You can't run from your problems, Roger. You can try, but eventually they catch up to you, and when they do, you've made them a lot worse.

There's a fine line between crazy and stupid. Roger Mayweather is both. He keeps getting accused of beating up women, and now he's compounding the problem.

Uncle Roger is seriously sullying the Mayweather name. And that ain't easy to do.

The Lampley Life Raft

For many years now, the calling of the name "Jim" by a boxing broadcaster has been strictly associated with Harold Lederman and his patented "I sound like someone's squeezing my family jewels" delivery. But on the night of September 19, a new "Jim"-calling sheriff rolled into town. That night, Max Kellerman infamously made the "Jim" holler his own by begging Lamps to bail him out when his postfight interview with Floyd Mayweather got uncomfortable. It almost sounded like George Jetson screaming for Jane to "stop this crazy thing!"

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Max in the middle

In the Baggarooney's opinion, the Maxmeister was doing okay with the tension between Mayweather and Shane Mosley until Floyd took a verbal swipe at Kellerman by telling him he talks too much. Then Max gave up and looked like a baby bird begging for a worm as he hollered, "Jim! Jim!"

For the most part, Kellerman has done well in his bid to replace Larry Merchant, but this is one area where it showed the young man still has a lot to learn. In that spot, Merchant would have taken charge, stood his ground, and put Mayweather in his place. He might even have choked somebody out if he had to. That's the kind of choking that gets you rave reviews from the fight community. Max choked in the other way, and he has some work to do to live it down.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

New York heavyweight Shawn McLean, an actor-turned-boxer who made clear that the ridiculously protected Faruq Saleem has been doing little more than acting like a boxer for the last 11 years. Saleem came into their September fight with a 38-0 (32) record that lacked a single credible opponent, and McLean, just 3-4 (2) coming in, showed just how inflated Saleem's record was by scoring a shocking fourth-round knockout.

McLean had appeared on *One Life To Live* and, in his biggest role, got beaten up once by Christopher on *The Sopranos*. This time, McLean did the beating. And that result was as unlikely on paper as Bobby Bacala winning a bodybuilding contest.

McLean did some work on an Emmy-winning TV show, but that hardware is nothing compared to a Stingray. Interestingly, McLean is now in the same line of work as Tony Soprano. After all, what he did against the coddled and untested Saleem definitely qualifies as waste management. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

McLean (right): Latest "Stingray" recipient

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 114, Blue Bell, PA 19422.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

Unprofessional And Arbitrary

I am writing in response to comments made in November's "Ryan Out Loud" column, in which Jeff Ryan wrote: "After all, there's a lot to be depressed about these days ... women's boxing has received the go-ahead for the 2010 Olympics ..." There were several other items on the list, but I felt that this particular comment was irresponsible. Of course Lennox Lewis will not be back and unfortunately the Kelly Pavlik-Paul Williams fight was delayed. But to cite the inclusion of women's boxing in the Olympics as depressing seems unprofessional and arbitrary. Our beloved sport reaches a new market and grows every time anyone first feels their hand inside a glove.

KURT KRUEGER
Fort Collins, CO

Why Cotto Isn't Champ

I can't work out why Miguel Cotto isn't THE RING's 147-pound champion, and why Shane Mosley is ranked higher, considering Cotto beat Mosley. Cotto has faced five of your top eight, and beaten all but one, and that was Antonio Margarito, who has been caught trying to cheat. Cotto is a warrior who, unlike the brilliant but cowardly Floyd Mayweather, will fight anyone.

BEN PUTTOCK
London, UK

Editor's note: To fill a RING championship vacancy, the number one- and number-two contenders have to fight each other within the division weight limit. There was no vacancy when Cotto fought Mosley, as Mayweather was the reigning RING champion at that time. When Mosley

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Reader Ben Puttock goes to bat for Miguel Cotto, and wants to know why he isn't THE RING welterweight champion. We provide an explanation, via editor's note, for Mr. Puttock and all the other readers who have asked the same question.

stopped Margarito, Margarito was number one and Mosley was number three. While The Ring will, under certain circumstances, approve a fight between number one and number three, we did not do so because Cotto, then rated number two, held a victory over Mosley. Subsequently, Mosley beat Margarito, which is why he is now rated above Cotto, who was stopped by Margarito. As it stands now, a fight between Mosley (currently number one) and Mayweather (number two) would qualify to fill the vacancy.

Judging Dilemma

Why do boxing fans just expect bad judging? Why do we just shrug our shoulders and say, "Oh, well that's boxing for you?" I think it's time to get rid of guys like Jerry Roth and Duane Ford—boxing judges who can't judge a fight after 20 years of doing it. Yet I see them together all the time when things go wrong. Its time for new judges. Please!

STEVEN KODIAK
Prince George, BC

Editor's note: We feel your pain, Steven. Unfortunately, fans and journalists have no say in the selection of judges. That's the job of the boxing commission of the jurisdiction in which a fight takes place. In the United States, the governor of the state appoints the commissioners. Therefore, your only recourse would be to complain to the state government who appointed the judges you believe are doing a lousy job.

Contented Reader

I enjoyed Jim Bagg's "The Decade's Biggest 'Didn'ts'" in the November 2009 issue. Perhaps The Ring can reserve space for readers to list bouts they'd like to see. Here are mine: Bernard Hopkins-David Haye, Shane Mosley-Manny Pacquiao, and Kelly Pavlik-Floyd Mayweather.

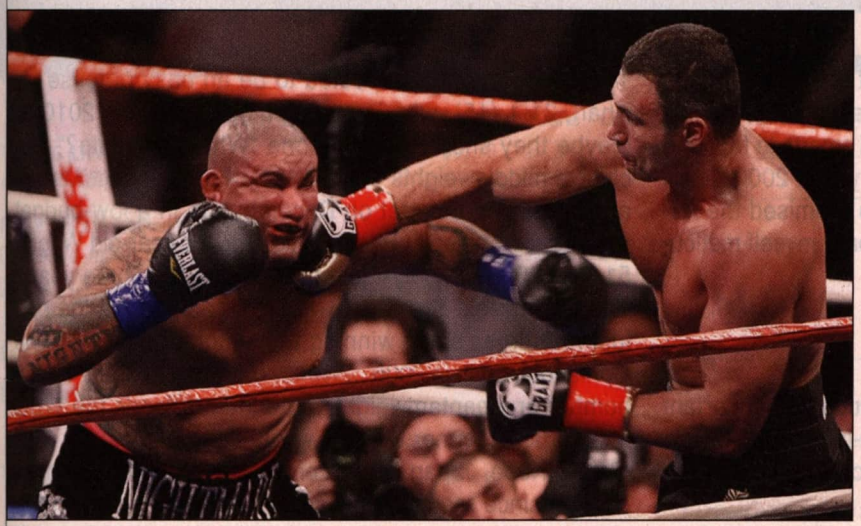
Finally, I deeply appreciated Gavin Evans' tribute to Alexis Arguello.

KURTIS C. A. WOLF
Glendale, AZ

The Fat Guy And The Clincher

Anyone wanting to understand the growing popularity of mixed martial arts needs only have watched (or tried to watch) the so-called heavyweight title fight between Vitali Klitschko and Chris Arreola, who should be ashamed of his bloated self for entering the ring looking like a slob. The energy Arreola spent weeping when the fight was mercifully (for us) stopped, would have been better used actually putting up a fight. Being subjected to this snooze-fest made me yearn for the comparative golden age of the 1980s. Come back Tony Tubbs, Tony Tucker, and David Bey. All is forgiven.

BRAD MORRIS
Astoria, New York ■



Vitali Klitschko slams a right into Chris Arreola, who did little against him. Reader Brad Morris questioned Arreola's discipline and Klitschko's tendency to clinch.

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[Looking Ahead]

By Don Stewart

"Kingpin" Next For Vitali

If the elite U.S. heavyweight is a dying breed, **Vitali Klitschko** is doing his part to thin the herd. Fresh off his spanking of outclassed **Chris Arreola** in September, the elder of the brothers Klitschko will defend his belt against unbeaten **Kevin Johnson** on December 12, in Bern, Switzerland.

Since returning from his four-year injury layoff, the 38-year-old Klitschko has looked sharp in three kayo wins, two of which came against Americans—Arreola (KO 10) and **Samuel Peter** (KO 8). He'll be heavily favored against the generally feather-fisted Johnson, 22-0-1 (9), whose May stoppage of 2004 U.S. Olympian **Devin Vargas** propelled him into THE RING top 10.

Klitschko, 38-2 (37), is a major step up in class for the 30-year-old Atlanta, Georgia, resident. For Johnson, who turned pro in 2003, meeting Klitschko is like hopping behind the wheel of a Ferrari after rolling around in an old Plymouth Reliant for six years.

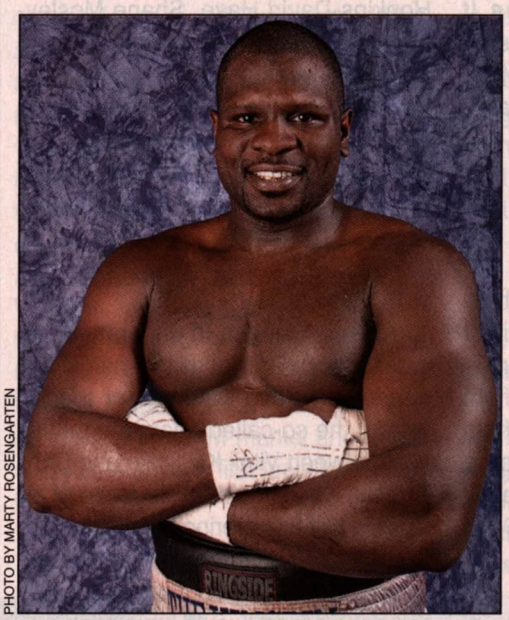

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Johnson to fight Vitali in Switzerland

"Kingpin" has showed a knack for stepping up his game when the level of opposition is raised, however. Back in June 2004, in just his fourth fight, Johnson earned a four-round draw against a much more seasoned **Timor Ibragimov**. He outpointed veterans **Robert Wiggins** and **Robert Hawkins** early in his career, and later did the same to notables **Damian Wills** and **Terry Smith** before stopping former titleholder **Bruce Seldon** in September 2008.

The 6'3" Johnson will have a 4½" height deficiency against Klitschko, but he'll have a slight reach advantage. Johnson has an excellent jab and isn't easy to hit. He just might possess enough skills, speed, and smarts to frustrate Klitschko, who lost to the slick **Chris Byrd** in 2000. "I will not underestimate Johnson," Klitschko promised the Associated Press, "and as always will prepare myself meticulously for my opponent."

Rematch City

A busy December schedule will include two important rematches that might fit that old if-a-tree-falls riddle. As this issue went to press, neither bout had secured a U.S. television outlet.

First up, top-ranked junior flyweight **Brian Viloria** will take a third crack at sixth-ranked **Omar Nino**. In 2006, Nino, 28-3-1 (11), won an easy 12-round decision against Viloria. The two fought to a draw three months later, but that result was changed to a no-contest after Nino failed a postfight drug test.

The 29-year-old Viloria, 26-2 (15), has won seven straight and is pushing for a crack at 108-pound champion **Ivan Calderon**. First, "The Hawaiian Punch" will have to lose Nino in the rearview mirror. "It's almost like having a monkey on my back," Viloria told PhilBoxing.com. "I feel like I need to get this off my conscience." The bout is scheduled for December 5 in the Philippines.

Six days later, THE RING's eighth-ranked light heavyweight, **Jean Pascal**, 24-1 (16), will slug it out with ninth-ranked **Adrian Diaconu**, 26-1 (15), in a rematch of their May fight-of-the-year candidate. This one will again be held in Montreal, the adopted hometown of both Pascal (Haiti) and Diaconu (Romania).

Another win for the 27-year-old Pascal would cement his status as a young lion in a division dominated by aging stars. And if Diaconu gets revenge? Don't be surprised if this rivalry follows Nino-Viloria into the trilogy category.

Listen up

On December 5 in Newcastle, England, junior welterweight **Amir Khan** faces New York-based Ukrainian **Dmitiry Salita**, 30-0-1 (16), in a mandatory defense of his 140-pound belt. It's expected to be an easy defense for Khan, 21-1 (15), who is eyeing bigger game in 2010 ... Maybe they should dub this one "Where's Waldo?" Reclusive middleweights **Winky Wright** and **Grady Brewer** are scheduled to meet on December 11 in a low-budget pay-per-view clash in Puerto Rico. The 38-year-old Wright, 51-5-1 (25), has fought just twice in the last three years. The 38-year-old Brewer, 26-11 (15), has been in the ring just four times since winning the second season of *The Contender*, back in 2006 ... **Hozumi Hasegawa**, THE RING's number one bantamweight contender, defends the WBC strap against former WBA flyweight titlist **Eric Morel**, 41-2 (21), in Kobe, Japan, on December 18. Morel has won six straight since resuming his career following a stint in the slammer. Hasegawa, 27-2 (11), will be making the 10th defense of the title. ■

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